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A
Practical Discourse
OF
Repentance,

Rectifying the Mistakes about it, especially
such as lead either to Despair or Presump-
tion. *Perswading* and *Directing* to the
True Practice of it,

AND
Demonstrating the Invalidity
OF

A Death-Bed Repentance.

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THE
PREFACE.

To his loving Friends and
Parishioners, the Inhabitants
of *St. Mary White-Chappel.*

I *T was for your sakes and for your use chiefly I composed this Discourse, and now offer it to your serious thoughts and most lasting consideration, that it may teach you the Right Knowledge and perswade you to the True Practice of that Great Duty it treats of. I have endeavoured to set it in such a Light as might remove the unreasonable Fears and Despairs of some Few, and the Presumptuous and false hopes of the far greater number of Sinners. I hope if you carefully peruse it*

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with

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with due thoughtfulness and application of mind it may give you both a Right Notion and Understanding of it, so as to free you from all dangerous and mischievous Mistakes about it, and that it will convey so much Warmth as well as Light to your thoughts as may by the Grace of God very much help to quicken and excite you to a speedy and thorough Repentance, and to a Holy and Good Life.

As it will in some measure give you clear thoughts of Religion in all the parts of it, which some who have a strong sense yet have dark and confused apprehensions about, and will enable you to make a right Judgment of your selves and Spiritual state by evident and obvious and certain marks, so I dare say that no Man who takes the whole force of it into his mind, and duly considers, and seriously attends to all the thoughts that it will suggest to him, will ever live in his sins, or continue to be a wicked Man.

One of the great Reasons that makes Men so even beyond Atheism and Infidelity is self (for they being contrary to the natural sense of our minds, prevail not upon so many as Superstition, False and corrupt Religion) is the perverting Christianity and corrupting the Gospel by Doctrines of
Loose-

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Looseness and Licentiousness, that give false hopes of Pardon and Salvation without Obedience and a good Life, and by some imaginary Scheemes; and some comfortable but Erroneous and even Damnable Doctrines reconcile Religion to Mens Lusts, and the hopes of Pardon and Happiness to a careless and wicked life.

How this is done in the Church of Rome by their Doctrines of Penance, Confession and Absolution, Contrition and Attrition, and the like, has been shown and made out by the Protestant Writers against them; and indeed I take those Principles to be the very Rotten Core of Popery, the Poyson and Philter by which it bewitches so many wretched Souls into its Communion, and the Antichristian Cup of Fornication that it gives the Kings and People of the Earth to drink.

The Loose Notions of Repentance which came at first from them, but have been taken up by many others since, put me upon this Design of Examining and Rectifying them, for I am perswaded there never was any Error or any Delusion of the Devil which hath destroyed more Souls than the fatal mistakes about this Duty, especially about a Dying Repentance; which has

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been the wretched Reserve of most wicked Men all their Lives, and the broken Reed they have trusted to at their Deaths, whereby they have been encouraged in their Sins, and had a kind of Protection, as they thought, against all the dangers of them by this privilege of Repenting at the last, and by having that allowed to be valid and sufficient by the terms of the Gospel.

By this they have all along had the reserved hopes of saving their Souls however wickedly they lived, and so have excused themselves from and shifted off the necessity of a Good life by this more easie and compendious way ; which though it were liable to some more accidental hazards, yet might as effectually do the Business by the standing principles of Religion, and by having, as was supposed, an ordinary Title to Pardon and Salvation.

*This hath greatly comforted Sinners, and greatly encouraged them in their Sins, when as is commonly said of a great many, they might hope though they lived very ill, yet to dye well and make a good end, and by being penitent at the last, like the Thief upon the Cross, to be surely pardon'd and go to Heaven ; and so this Comfortable Disjunctive has been set up, or twofold way of going to Heaven, either by living well and
be-*

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being good Men before we come to Dye, or else by Repenting and being sorry at that time that we were not so.

The Consequences to Religion and a good Life are so plain and fatal from hence, and I have known so many sad Instances of its dreadful mischief in my frequent attending the Sick (whereby my experience in this case, if not my skill, has made me a good Physician) that I thought I could not do more Service to God and Religion, and the Souls of Men than to rescue them from such false Notions and pernicious Mistakes about a matter of so great consequence, and do all I could effectually to perswade them to the Practice of such a true Repentance as is not to be Repented of.

The serving such an excellent Design makes me venture this Discourse into the World without being concerned for the many Defects and Imperfections in the Style, Phrase and Words, which a nice Critick may find in it; but I am sure the pious and well-disposed Reader will excuse and overlook those when he is affected with the thought and matter which is of so great moment and importance; and when he is satisfied with the virtue and wholsomness of the Physick, he will not I hope be so delicate as to find

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find fault with its being either too much or too little gilded.

I confess some part of it hath lain by many Years. (even beyond Horace's ninth) and hath many youthful strokes in it, to show it was drawn before the rest, and to excuse its Dress and Colours; but the Thought and Notion is all of a piece, and I have had it so long, and considered it so fully, that if any shall differ from me after reading it thorough, for the strength of it lies in the Frame and Contexture of the whole and not in any single part, I should very much wonder and be glad to know his Reasons.

I have chosen sometimes to repeat the same Notion as there was occasion rather than to refer the Reader back again to another place, where there would not be such an immediate connexion with what he was just reading, so that he would lose the sight of what went before with looking after it, and would not see the thing so well in one view.

I have often thought that we wanted a Just and entire Discourse of Repentance and all that relates to it, and have wondered that among all our Excellent Practical Treatises we should hardly have one such fitted for common use; among other Reasons

The Preface.

sons, of which I believe this may not be the least, That 'tis one of the most difficult things to write on an easie Subject, as 'tis the hardest to paint Light.

When I drew the Model of this, and had some of the Materials lying by me and ready framed, I thought the perfecting and finishing it would not have cost me half the charge and pains and expence that I found it has, and most Writers I believe like Builders find this, and even afterwards when they have done, they see many things they could mend and alter, though they care not for being at the cost of pulling down again and building up anew. It was only the Strength and Usefulness and Conveniency I had regard to, and it may have those, tho' like a House built by parts and not altogether, it want all that regular Order and Beauty that should set it off. It is to be looked on only as a Popular Discourse to teach an useful Truth in Religion, and raise the Affections and Imaginations up to it, without that care and exactness that is to be observed in closer Writings. It will fully answer its end if it can but convey a clear and lively an Understanding and warm sense of Religion into Mens Minds, and free their Thoughts

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from such Mistakes, and their Lives from such Sins as are too prevailing in the World, and which like the Sea and its Rivers proceed from and maintain and run into one another; For Men's Lusts and Vices make them willing to take up with false and loose Principles in Religion, and those Principles feed and promote their Vice and Looseness.

The Sincerity and Zeal of serving so good an end, as I have had my Eye all along upon, or at least of endeavouring heartily to do it, hath sufficiently armed me against all manner of Censures whatsoever, and hath given me more satisfaction than if I had either had the ability, or could have vainly promised my self the Applause of writing the Wittiest or Learnedest Book in the World. This however mean and imperfect it is, as I here put into your Hands. So I presume to Dedicate to the Great God and my Blessed Redeemer, the best Patrons who will certainly reward those that serve them, heartily praying that it may be Serviceable to their Honour and Glory, to the promoting Vertue and Religion, the bringing Men off from Sin and Wickedness, the Conversion and Salvation of Souls, and the Turning of Sinners from the Errors of their ways unto Righteousness, that so both they and I may have the Rewards promised to all such.

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A

Practical Discourse OF Repentance.

INTRODUCTION.

Repentance is the great Gospel Duty which *John the Baptist* came Preaching, as a Preparation to Christianity; *Matth. 3. 2.* Our Saviour also himself began with the same; *Matth. 4. 17.* The Disciples chose the same Subject to Preach on, *Mark 6. 12.* They went out and Preacht that Men should Repent. *St. Peter* in his Sermon to the Jews, whereby he Converted three thousand Souls, Preaches to them this Duty, *Acts 2. 38.* And this was what *St. Paul* testified to the Jews, and to the Greeks, Repentance towards God, and Faith

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towards

towards our Lord Jesus Christ, *Acts 20. 21.* as if the whole sum of the Gospel lay in those two: Nay, our Saviour himself makes this the very end and design both of his Sufferings, and of his Resurrection, *that Repentance and Remission of Sins should be Preached in his name, Luke 24. 46, 47.*

It is a Duty therefore of the greatest moment and importance in Christianity, and ought above all to be considered, practiced and understood.

The only Question is, Whether it be so proper and necessary to preach it to Christians now, as it was at first to *Jews and Gentiles*? The whole World then lay in wickedness, and God had concluded all under sin, and in a state of great corruption, both as to Manners and Worship; so that Christ came then as a Physician to Cure the Sick, and prescribed this Medicine of Repentance as proper to their case and condition at that time, and tells us himself, that *he came not to call the Righteous, but sinners to Repentance, Matth. 9. 13.* But 'tis to be hoped that the World is well amended under Christianity, that they who have been brought up in the knowledge of that excellent Religion, and been devoted to it all their Lives, and had all the opportunities and advantages, as well as obligations of being vertuous, who have in their Baptism put on Christ, and dyed to sin, and by the most solemn Vows and Professions been engaged to a Holy Life all their Days; 'tis not to be thought that they stand in need of such a Repentance, or of having it so Preacht to them, or that they shall have the same Benefit of it as the

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ignorant and unhappy World before the Coming of Christ into it.

I Answer, Repentance was not a Temporary Duty in the beginning only of Christianity, and fitted to the *Jews* and *Gentiles*, who were first brought over to it, as the *Socinians* would have Baptism, but it was a perpetual and lasting Duty, such as the weakness and infirmity of Human Nature, and its aptness to fall into Sin, would make always necessary; and sad would it be for Christians if they were not to have the Benefit of it after Baptism as well as before, which would put them into a worse State than Mankind were in before without Christianity; but though Repentance I own was Preach'd to them then upon some peculiar accounts, and implied a total change of their Religion and their way of Life, which belongs not to Christians, and was a Duty previous to Christianity, and what was to go before their Baptism, and was hardly allowed to those who should afterwards Apostatize from it; yet it still remains a Duty to us after we are become Christians, so far as we are guilty of any Sin after we are washed in the laver of Regeneration: The virtue and benefit of it is not *transient* and confined only to that time, but *permanent* and in force afterwards all our Lives, if we truly perform it: And according to the different nature and degree of our Sins such is our Repentance, as *Physick*, differently fitted to the nature of the Disease, (so the best Authors represent it †) to repair the several decays and weaknesses of Human Nature, to

† Πρωτον εστιν ην ην ουσιας
αγαθη ειναι ρουζα το ην ουσια
Socrates apud Xenoph.
phon. l. 4. de diff. Et scilicet
Socrat.

Ἰατρῆον ὅτι ἀναστροφὴν
 ὁ ἁμαρτίας ἢ μετάνοια.
 Chryl. Hom. 78. Tom. 6.

Τῶν ἁμαρτυμάτων λυτή-
 ριον, ὅς' σπλαιμάτων κα-
 θαρτήριον. Chr. Hom. 113.

Μετάνοια πάσης ψυχικῆς
 καὶ σωματικῆς ἀδυναμίας ἰα-
 τρῆον καὶ σωτήριον φάρμακον.
 Ibid.

cure it of the many
 maladies it is incident
 to, and to bring it to
 such health, strength
 and soundness, as be-
 longs to the Spiritual,
 and Christian, and Di-
 vine Life of the Soul,
 which is the aim, and
 end, and business of

Repentance, the great *Panacea* of the Gospel,
 which supposes us apt to be ill, and recovers us
 as often as we are so.

It was not a duty so properly of natural Re-
 ligion, because it depended on, and is mainly
 encouraged by the Promise of God's free Grace
 and forgiveness of Sin, which could not be
 known by natural light; but by that it was
 evident, that they who had done any thing fool-
 ishly and wickedly, should become wiser and
 better, and the reflection upon any bad actions
 was attended with sorrow from the Principles
 of Natural Conscience, as *Plutarch* excellently

* Τὸ γὰρ συνειδέναι ὅτι ἔλκε-
 ον ἐν σαρκὶ ὁ ψυχῆς τὴν μετα-
 μίλλαν αἰμώουσαν αἰεὶ καὶ
 πύουσαν ἐναπολίπῃ τὰς ἡμέ-
 ρας ἀλλὰ δὲ ἀναιρεῖ λύπῃς ὁ
 λόγος τὴν μετάνοιαν αὐτὸς
 ἐργάζεται δακρυόδωλον σὺν
 αἰσθήνῃ καὶ καταζωοφύλλῃ ὑπὸ
 αὐτῆς. *Plutarch. de Animi*
tranquill.

describes it, * *The Soul*
throbbing and beating
like a painful Ulcer, ex-
ercising a Repentance
with great shame, that
is biting and tormenting
to it self: But this was
rather the Disease than
the Remedy, and they
felt only the Smart

which was Natural, but knew not the Cure
 which was Christian and Evangelical.

The

The Prophets in the Old Testament Preach'd Repentance to the *Jews*, and Pardon upon it, as fully and clearly as Christ and his Apostles in the New ; but it was by vertue not of the Old, but the New Covenant which was in force before the Law, as St. *Paul* assures us, *Gal.* 3. 17. and to this they owed all their Spiritual Blessings, such as Grace, Pardon of Sin, and Eternal Life, as they did their Temporal, and the Land of *Canaan* to the other.

Many of the *Jews* did not think such a Repentance necessary to the partaking the benefits of the *Messiahs* Kingdom, as was Preach'd by *John the Baptist*, and afterwards by Christ and his Apostles, but they thought it was sufficient to be true *Israelites*, or the Children of *Abraham*, and that this would entitle them to the Kingdom of the *Messiah* here, and Heaven hereafter.

The *Talmudists* have this comfortable Legend among them, That *Abraham* stands at the Gates of Hell, that if the Soul of a wicked *Jew* come thither, he may keep it out, like to which some ignorant Christians think now of Christ. *John the Baptist* corrected this mistake, when he bad them bring forth fruits meet for Repentance ; and think not to say within your selves, we have *Abraham* to our Father, *Matth.* 3. 8, 9. And so does our Saviour particularly in his Discourse with *Nicodemus* about the necessity of Regeneration, *John* 3. and this was probably one great reason why they all began with, and so earnestly pressed and recommended this Duty of Repentance, as necessary in the first place to those who would be Disciples of Christ.

6 A Practical Discourse

All Christians generally do acknowledge the necessity of it, and, since we cannot live perfectly innocent so as to be free wholly from all manner of Sin, that we must instead of this entire Obedience, perform true and sincere Repentance, which next to it is the most acceptable to Heaven.

But there are grievous and fatal mistakes about this Duty of Repentance, which being made up of several parts, many are willing to take some of them for the whole, and to make the essence of it lye in those things which are only preparatory or instrumental to it; this being a *Panacea*, the universal Medicine of the Gospel against all our Sins, they would compound it of such pitiful and weak ingredients as will not work upon the Disease, and drive out the corrupt matter, and have its due effect upon their Minds and Lives, but if it a little gripe and disorder them, and they feel some remorse and compunction upon their Minds, and some transient Passions of Grief and Sorrow upon their Souls, they think this is Repentance, though it have no further influence to better and reform their Hearts and Lives. They look upon Repentance as a kind of bitter draught that must be taken, *cum regimine*, like Spiritual Physick spring and fall perhaps, or at some set times, or after a Debauch, or some great Sin, and this shall serve them for the whole year after, and they may then return to their sins and looseness again with more freedom and greater appetite, when that penitential course and discipline is over; and thus they Sin and Repent, Repent and Sin, and never

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never get out of that fatal Circle : Or they may not put themselves perhaps to all this trouble, but leave it all to the last, and then resolve to Repent at once for all the Sins of their whole Lives, and so do the business more concisely, and yet as effectually all together.

This all proceeds from a wrong and wretched notion of Repentance, as if it consisted only in some sudden passions of the Mind, and inward workings of the Thoughts, and not in the lasting change both of Heart and Life, and in the universal amendment of both. Those who do not truly understand it, account it so easie and slight, and gentle a remedy, that will perform its work so easily and suddenly, that they are hereby greatly encouraged in their Sins, because there is so present, and ready, and cheap a Cure for them.

Others who are of a different temper, made up of Melancholly and Timorousness, they are apt to fall into the other extreme, and to think their Sins, though none of the greatest, yet may be of such a nature as shall never be forgiven ; and they are extremely fearful and scrupulous, that they are of that sort which the Scripture has declared unpardonable ; and since some seem to be so, they can never be persuaded but theirs may be of that number or quality, and so they run into a thousand doubts and fears, if not into absolute despair of the truth and validity of their Repentance. All the failings and imperfections which are unavoidable to our Nature, and our present State, these they magnifie into heinous and mortal Sins, as others are apt to lessen those into weaknesses and infirmities.

I shall therefore as carefully as I can, consider this great Subject, with all the parts belonging to it, in this following Method.

- I. I shall give a full account of the Nature of Repentance, with its Kinds and Degrees, that so we may have a true Notion and Understanding of it, and avoid the common Mistakes about it.
- II. I shall propose the great Motives to it, especially those of the Gospel, and such as are peculiar to Christianity.
- III. I shall enquire whether all Sins are pardonable, and may have the benefit of Repentance; those after Baptism, after Relapse: And under this Head I shall particularly consider the Sin against the Holy Ghost, the Nature of it, and why or whether unpardonable; and take notice also of other things of this kind but of a lesser nature, such as Lustings of the Flesh, and Trouble of Mind.
- IV. I shall consider a Death-Bed Repentance, and enquire into the validity of it, and consider the case of the Thief upon the Cross.
- V. I shall endeavour to obviate the mischievous Mistakes, and prevent the bad Consequences that too many are apt to draw from this Gospel Priviledge of Repentance.
- VI. I shall give some Practical Rules about the particular Exercise of this Duty.
- VII. I shall lay down a certain Mark or Criterion by which we may know we have Repented, and are in a pardoned and good State.

of REPENTANCE.

CHAP. I.

Giving a full Account of the Nature of Repentance.

SECT. I.

Scripture Words for Repentance.

AS to a true Notion of Repentance, there are several words in Scripture by which it is expressed; the chief and most remarkable are these three, *μεταμέλεια*, *μετάνοια* and *Ἀποστροφή*, or *Ἐπιστροφή*. The two first we translate by Repentance, and have no other word for them; the last is turning away from our Sins, and turning to God and Goodness. The 1. *μεταμέλεια*, is an after concern or trouble arising from our Sins, when our Mind and Conscience smite us when we have done amiss, and we feel inward trouble and horreur arising in our Souls upon the reflection of our past Folly and Wickedness. This is attributed to Judas, *Matth. 27. 3.* Then Judas which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was Condemned, Repented, *μεταμελόμενος*. So that this is but a low part of Repentance, though if it be duly qualified, it may be that Godly sorrow which worketh Repentance not to be Repented of, *2 Cor. 7. 10.* If the bitterness we taste in

in Sin turn our Appetite from it, and our Grief quite remove our love for it ; if our tears help to wash away our Sins, and to cleanse our guilty and polluted Souls, then however sharp or brackish they are, they are sanative and medicinal, and so have a true vertue and efficacy in them, without which they are useles and insignificant. 2. *Metanoia* is an after-Thinking, or an after-Wisdom and Understanding, when the Sin we thought before so charming and inviting, so that it tempted us with its seeming Pleasure or Profit, or some appearance of good, which was the reason we chose and embraced it, we now see and understand to be foolish and unreasonable, mischievous and pernicious, and are under full convictions of the sad consequences and effects of it, and therefore have both wishes and desires that we had never committed it, and purposes and resolutions not to be guilty of it again : Now this goes a great deal further than the other, but still it goes no further than the Mind, and the inward Thoughts, Passions and Affections there, which may be if not Insincere yet Ineffective. There must be something further to make up and perfect Repentance ; which is 3. *Amotepia* and *Enotepia*, turning from Sin, and turning to God and Goodness. Thus the Scripture speaks most clearly of Repentance, *Ezek. 18. 21. If the wicked turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and doth that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not dye. Again at ver. 27. When the wicked turneth away from his wickedness, and doth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. And at ver. 28. Because he considereth and turneth from all his transgressions*

essions that he hath committed, he shall surely
 e, he shall not dye. So Acts 26. 20. That they
 ould repent and turn to God, which are homo-
 imous, and turn from darkness to light, and
 om the power of Satan unto God, ver. 18. This
 leaving a wrong path or course of actions
 e have been engaged in, and entring upon a
 etter. And this more fully declares the na-
 re of Repentance, that 'tis an actual amend-
 ment and reformation of our Lives, a ceasing to
 o evil, and learning to do well, as the Prophet
 xpresses it, Isa. 1. 16, 17. When they do good
 at are accustomed to do evil; as another Pro-
 her, Jer. 13. 23. when they who have been bad
 n any instance become good; this is the very
 ssence of Repentance, as I shall further shew
 ou; 'tis Obedience after Disobedience, Vertue
 fter Vice, Good after Evil, and these three to-
 ether make up true Repentance, which is in-
 eed the whole practical Condition of the Gos-
 el, as St. Paul turns it up.

SECT. II.

Kinds and Degrees of Repentance.

BUT before I come to discourse fully of
 that, I must premise some Limits and Cau-
 tions about this Duty, or else we shall talk
 very confusedly about it in general, as belong-
 ing alike to all Persons. Now there are several
 sorts and kinds of Repentance, according to
 the several kinds and degrees of Sinners. one
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There are some Sinners whose Lives are like a leprous Body spread all over with Corruption and Filthiness, as the Prophet describes the Wickedness of the Jews, *Isa. 1. 6. From the sole of the foot even to the head there is no soundness in it, but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores; i. e.* They have been wicked in the general tenor and habit of their Lives; and these must be wholly changed; the whole mass being corrupted it must be quite altered: The whole frame of their Minds, and whole course of their Actions must be made quite otherwise; like a Defiled Body they must be washed all over; or rather, like a dead Carcass they must be raised to life again, and restored wholly from their state of Death and Corruption which they were in before.

There are others who are not so Diseased all over, but yet have some mortal illness growing in some part upon them, who are guilty of some particular Sins, some known and wilful Faults that destroy their good state, and put them into the rank, though not of the greatest Sinners, yet of such Sinners as shall not enter into Heaven, nor escape Eternal Wrath and Vengeance, unless they particularly Repent of them, and wholly forsake and leave them: And thus every one who is conscious to himself that he is, or has been ever guilty of any known and great Sin, whatever it be, though it should be but one such Sin, must amend that, and must get off that particular illness, or else it will prove Deadly and Mortal if it continue upon him; for one such Disease, or one such Wound, whilst 'tis uncured upon the Soul, will kill and destroy

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roy it as well as more. Though a Man may
 be universally depraved, nor be wholly
 constituted to Debauchery and Irreligion, yet
 he will indulge himself in any known Sin, or
 any particular Lust and Wickedness, he is
 in a lost and undone state, till he repents and
 wholly leaves that Sin ; And if a Man is in a
 good state, and fall into a wilful and great Sin,
 as we know *David* did, that surely cuts him off
 for a time from his good state, and renders
 him liable to God's Anger here, and to Misery
 hereafter, till by a serious and hearty Repen-
 tance he recovers himself, and is so perfectly
 recovered from the Sin that he will never com-
 mit it again, whatever Temptation is offered
 to him.

There are other Sins which are of a lower
 and less heinous Nature, which do not destroy
 our good state, nor put us out of the Favour
 of God, nor exclude us out of Heaven ; and
 these are such as very good Men are subject to,
 and may not be free from whilst they are in
 this body of Sin and Corruption. As the most
 healthful and best Constitutions may be subject
 to some smaller Illnesses and Indispositions of
 Body, though not to great and mortal Disea-
 ses, so some Frailties, Failures and Imperfe-
 ctions, will stick to the best of Men, though
 not any mortal and wilful Sins ; and these
 Frailties and Infirmitie are Sins in a strict
 sense, as coming short of perfect Obedience to
 the Divine Law ; and these are in some sense
 also to be repented of, i. e. we are to be sen-
 sible of them, and sorry for them, and we
 are every day to Pray to God to forgive us these

our

our Trespasses, and we are to endeavour to overcome them as much as is possible, and never let them grow, as they may by neglect, into wilful Sins; but these are all pardonable by the Mercy of God, and by vertue of the gracious Covenant which he hath made with us in Christ Jesus, upon a general Repentance, without a perfect and particular amendment of all of them, which is utterly impossible and inconsistent with Human frailty and infirmity.

There is therefore a great difference to be made, in respect of several kinds of Sins, and several sorts of Sinners, of this great Duty of Repentance.

There are some of whom the Scripture says, *that they need no Repentance*, Luke 15. 7. i. e. who need not such a Repentance as shall change and alter their Spiritual state, who never were in a bad state, being early Baptized, nor never were guilty in their whole lives of any one such great and wilful, and heinous Sin, as put them into a damnable state: I hope there are not a few who are in this blessed condition, and therefore who need not this greater Repentance, as I think I may call it, who by the blessing of God, and by means of a very Vertuous and Religious Education, have been early trained up in the ways of Goodness, and never departed from them; who were set right at first, and never wandred or strayed out of the paths of Vertue; whose Feet never slipt so far as to take hold of the paths of Death, or be caught in the snares of the Devil; who never defiled themselves with any great Sin, but have preserved their Virgin-Purity, and have had no
foul

oul spot to sully the Whiteness and Beauty of
 heir whole unblemisht Conversation, but were
 always Innocent and always Safe, like *Zachar-*
ias and *Elizabeth* were always righteous before
 God, walking in all the Commandments and Ord-
 nances of the Lord blameless, *Luke* 1. 6.

I cannot say these are wholly Sinless and al-
 together perfect, for so none of the Race of
Adam, or the Children of Men are, except our
 Blessed Saviour; for there are some Infirmities,
 and Weaknesses, and Imperfections, that be-
 long to these, and so they stand in need of that
 lesser Repentance I before spake of, but they
 never were guilty of the great Offence, and
 so need not that greater Repentance which
 others do.

And 'tis of that I now speak, a *Repentance*
 from dead works, as the Apostle calls it, *Heb.*
 6. 1. A Repentance from wilful and mortal
 Sins, such as put us into an ill state, and such as
 we shall certainly perish except we Repent of them,
Luke 13. 3.

SECT. III.

True Notion of Repentance.

NOW this Repentance I would thus de-
 scribe, answerable to those three words
 by which it is exprest in Scripture, *A sorrow for*
our Sins, joyned with change and alteration of
Mind, and amendment or reformation of Life; or
 such a sense of Mind as makes us leave and
 forsake, or turn away from every Sin, or all
 the

the Sins we have been guilty of, and practice the contrary Vertues, or perform those other Duties we have broken or been wanting in. Thus, where we have been bad Men in any instance, and violated our Duty, and offended God, and broken or transgressed his Laws, it will make us become good Men afterwards, and perform our Duty, and return to God, and keep or obey his Commandments in all those cases wherein we have done otherwise before. This, this alone is such a Repentance as avails to Pardon and Salvation; as it takes away every Sin which would Damn us, and brings us to that Obedience, and practice of all Vertue and Holiness, without which *no Man can see God*, or be saved.

Repentance, I own, is a word of an equivocal meaning, that signifies several things, and has several senses belonging to it; as sorrow and trouble of Mind, change of Thoughts, and the like; which are meant by the Latin *Penitentia* and *Resipiscentia*, and by the Greek *Μεταμέλεια* and *Μετάνοια*; and it is commonly taken for something that goes no further than a Man's own Mind, for the inward working and change of its own Thoughts, and the sorrow and trouble it conceives upon the reflection of its past Sins, and the consideration of its bad state. And here it is Repentance must first begin, in the Mind, the principle of all Moral actions, its being sensible of its Evil ways, and truly Sorrowful and Afflicted for them; when its Heart is smitten within, and bleeds as it were from those inward wounds it feels in its own Conscience, and when it vents it self in
all

of REPENTANCE. 17

the sorrowful expressions of inward trouble, when it *weeps bitterly*, like St. Peter, *Matth. 26.* and rivers of tears run down its eyes because it has not kept the Law of its God; when it is *pricked to the heart*, *Acts 2. 37.* and is under very deep compunction and contrition of Soul, and mourns and laments for its grievous Wickedness; when it is afraid of the Anger and Indignation of that God whom it has offended, and has a just dread of those Punishments it nows it has deserved; when it is under great convictions of the folly and evil of its Sins, and very sensible of the sad *fruits* and consequences of *those things whereof it is now ashamed*; when it considers how little Benefit and Advantage ever got by them when it committed them, and to what a sad account they now turn, and how that *the end of them* is like to be *Death and damnation*. This inward sense and godly sorrow, if it continue upon the Mind, and go not off like a morning dew, or an halcy Cloud or sudden Storm, will surely *work Repentance* not *be Repented of*, will bring it to perfect and true Repentance, not only to Confession and humiliation, and afflicting its Soul by Fasting, and putting on Sackcloth and Ashes, which may be signs and attendants sometimes, but no proper parts or acts of true Repentance; but it will beget in it good Purposes and Resolutions of becoming better, and forsaking its Sins, it will wish that it had never committed them, and sincere Vows and Intentions to forsake them for whilst it has that sense upon its Mind, it cannot well do otherwise. Now this is a very good beginning, and a very good part of Repentance;

and it wants nothing to make it true, perfect and compleat, but *bringing forth fruits meet for Repentance*, *Matth. 3. 8. Acts 26. 20.* that is, all this having an effect upon the Life and Actions, mending and reforming those, and making them suitable and agreeable to those inward Thoughts and Passions of Mind, that we may be not only renewed in our minds, but become new Men, and new Creatures, and walk in newness of Life, *Rom. 6. 4.* That we may put off concerning the former conversation, the old Man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful Lusts, and may put on the new Man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness, *Eph. 4. 22, 24.* That we put off the body of the sins of the flesh, *Coloss. 2. 11.* That if we have yielded our members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity, unto iniquity, so now that we yield our members servants of righteousness unto holiness, *Rom. 6. 19.* That we be washed, that we be cleansed, *1 Cor. 6. 11.* That we sin no more, *John 5. 14.* That denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world, *Tit. 2. 12.* For Repentance is the whole practical condition of Christianity, and together with Faith, makes up the entire duty of a Christian, as St. Paul sums it up, *Acts 20. 21.* Testifying both to the Jews and to the Greeks, Repentance towards God, and Faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. That we who were enemies to God by our wicked works, may be reconciled to him, by Conversion and Obedience, and may become holy and unblamable, and unreprouable in his sight, *Coloss. 1. 2. 1, 22.* That we being made free from Sin, and become servants to God, may have our fruit unto holiness

and

and the end everlasting life, Rom. 6. 22. Which are the full and excellent descriptions which are given us in the New Testament of this Duty of Repentance, which make actual Reformation and Obedience essential to it, and which make it consist plainly in these two things;

I. In a relinquishing and forsaking every Sin, or all the Sins we have been guilty of.

II. In performing and practising the Vertues contrary to those Sins.

In St. Peter's Phrase, *Eschewing Evil and doing Good*, 1 Pet. 3. 11. i. e. The good that is contrary to the former evil.

Διὰ τὸ πλὴν ἀφίκεται μετάνοια ὅτι μεταπίπτει τὸ πῦρ ἀπὸ τοῦ κακοῦ πρὸς τὸ ἀγαθόν. Quast. Athanas. ascript. Q. 133. de Parab. 72. p. 435.

Μετάνοιαν λέγουσιν εἶναι τὸ πρὸς ἀγαθὸν ἀποστρέφειν καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ κακοῦ ἀφίκεται μετάνοια ὅτι μεταπίπτει τὸ πῦρ ἀπὸ τοῦ κακοῦ πρὸς τὸ ἀγαθόν. Quast. Athanas. ascript. Q. 133. de Parab. 72. p. 435.

Μετάνοια δὲ μεταστροφὴ ἀπὸ τοῦ κακοῦ πρὸς τὸ ἀγαθόν. Chrys. Hom. 10. in Math. Μετάνοια δὲ μεταστροφὴ ἀπὸ τοῦ κακοῦ πρὸς τὸ ἀγαθόν. Chrys. Hom. 10. in Math.

I. A relinquishing and forsaking every Sin, or all the Sins we have been guilty of. We must first break off the practice of those, and cease from any one act of them, and so we shall by degrees break the strength and force of them upon our Minds: For as all habits grow upon us by many repeated acts, which are like so many strokes, as it were beating upon the Mind, that do form and fashion it into such a habit and disposition; so when this force and impression is taken off, the habit will grow more weak and languid, and the Mind will be able to recover and unbend it self from it: Let us then resolutely

cease from acting, and certainly if any thing be in our power, our outward actions are, and we shall find that the most habitual Sin will fade and wither, as being without that recruit which should feed and nourish it ; for all Habits grow by new and repeated Acts, as a Tree by the accession of new sap into its Branches ; and if they be not supplied with these, they will decay and dye of themselves. If we can but put a little stop to our Lusts in their violent career, and check but a few acts of them, this will keep them from being so unruly and ungovernable, till in time we may wholly Master and Conquer them. The Sinner must first keep himself from the outward act, from touching the unclean thing wherewith he was defiled ; he must refrain his feet from every evil way, and go on no further in a wrong path, that so he may return into the ways of Vertue. If his Repentance does not make him break off every Transgression, and keep him back from every Sin, and restrain him from the commission of what he was formerly guilty of, though it makes him never so much troubled and dissatisfied with what he does, though he commits it with never so much reluctance, and is never so sorrowful for it after he has done it ; yet if he still commits it, and repeats it when a Temptation is offered to him, he is very far from true Repentance ; and let him be never so unwillingly drag'd to it, so that *the Evil which he doth he would not*, let him not comfort himself with that, for so long as he doth it he is a slave to it, and he is *led captive* by it so strongly, that it over-powers even his Conscience and his Reason, and till he can break loose

loose from it, so as not to commit it again, he is a *servant of sin*, and under the greatest bondage and servitude. Let a Man have never so much dislike of his Sins, and pretend never so much to abominate and abhor them in his thoughts, yet if he commits them in his practice, 'tis but *protestatio*, as we say, *contra factum*, but a fruitless Repentance that still brings forth the unfruitful works of darkness ; for 'tis not what Men think of their Sins, but their not doing of them, that is the true fruit of Repentance.

II. As we must leave the Sin, so we must practice the contrary Vertue. And this will be more easily and readily done ; for if the Habit of Vice and Wickedness be destroyed, that of Vertue will follow of course ; as if the Disease be removed, Health is restored. *Virtus est Vitium fugere*, The very leaving of Vice is the coming to Vertue. For the Mind cannot stand still, but is a moving and an active Principle, and if it be not Vicious it will be Vertuous, it cannot stand neuter and indifferent to those two, but will necessarily take either one side or the other. He that leaves off Drunkenness, by so doing becomes sober. He that will no longer defraud must necessarily become just. The contrary Vertue does in most cases succeed the forsaken Vice, as Light does succeed Darkness, and Day Night. It does not I confess do it always ; for it does not necessarily follow that he who does not Swear should be Devout, nor that he who does not cheat should be Charitable ; nor that he who will not BlaspHEME God should Worship him ; and yet those are very meet and

worthy fruits of Repentance, that he who has prophaned the Sacred Name of God by customary Swearing, should not only leave off that upon his Repentance, but with a Religious dread and awful veneration should ever after Adore and Worship him; and he that has been Unjust and Unrighteous, should not only break off his sin by Righteousness, but by shewing Mercy to the Poor, Dan. 4. 27. That as Sin did before abound, so now the contrary Grace and Vertue may much more abound, as the Apostle speaks in another case, and as he says in the like case to the Roman Christians who were once impure Gentiles, *As ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness, and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness*, Rom. 6. 19. That now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye may have your fruit unto holiness, ver. 22. and that this fruit may be the greater because of the former barrenness and unfruitfulness which we were guilty of. He that has neglected any necessary Duty, and so is guilty of a Sin of Omission, is bound to Amend and Repent of that as much as of any other Sin, and so Repentance will oblige him to the practice of all manner of Vertue, as well as the quitting and abandoning of all manner of Sin. The true Penitent must not only pluck up all the Habits of Sin in his Soul, and weed out all those venomous seeds of Wickedness that have grown up into sinful practices, but he must have all manner of Vertue planted in his Heart, and he must bring forth the fruits of his Repentance in an universal Goodness and Holiness of Life; and unless it does so, it is not

as I shall shew you, true and perfect Repentance, because nothing else can restore the Mind to a soundness and a good state. And Repentance is like a recovery of Health after Sickness. The Disease must be thoroughly got off, the sickly matter must be discharged, the illness must be cured and removed, and when that is done, the Patient must get his former strength, and be able to perform all the proper and vital Operations, and till he does this we cannot say he is well: So till a Sinner has wholly got rid of his past Sins, and has utterly relinquish'd and forsaken them, till he has purged them all out by Repentance, and has brought himself, by the Grace of God, to such a Spiritual strength and soundness, as to perform the proper Duties and Operations of the new Life, and to practice those Vertues which were contrary to his former Vices, he cannot be said to be recovered to a state of Health and Soundness, and true Repentance. He may be under a method of Cure indeed, as a sick Man is under a course of Physick, and in some fair hopes and a likely way of recovery before this; and this is often called Repentance; and 'tis a part of it but not the whole: But the great Work is not done, nor is his Repentance finish'd and perfected till he is come to this, to forsake every former Sin, and practice the contrary Vertue. How long he is to do this, I shall not determine, as I cannot tell how long a Man must be free from a Disease before he is well, and how much time exactly there must be between a state of Sickness and that of Health. 'Tis hard to fix the indivisible point between those two states; and so it is between a state of

Sin and a perfect Repentance of it; but all Men can still know pretty easily when they are well, and so they may by this sure mark when they have truly and fully Repented, namely, when they have thus *brought forth the fruits of Repentance*, *Math. 3. 8.* Repentance is not to be known, neither is it to be counted true, or at least perfect without those: Those Fruits of it indeed are not different from the thing it self, they are not only Signs, and outward Marks and Indications of it, as the Fruit of a Tree is a sign that the Tree is alive, for here the Tree would not be alive at all, if it were without that Fruit. These are not then only a sign that his Repentance is true; but they are like our Breath, which is not only a sign that we are alive, but that very thing by which we live. True and perfect Repentance consists in those, and is never without them; as I shall shew by considering what an imperfect thing all the Repentance is which is done in a Mans Mind, without any effect upon his Life and Actions.

S E C T. IV.

Mental Repentance imperfect without Actual

ALL that Sorrow and Trouble for Sin which a Sinner feels in his own Soul, all that Conviction and Condemnation of his ill state and sad condition, by reason of his past Sins when he reflects upon them, and all those Vows, and Purposes and Resolutions of leaving his Sins, and living better hereafter, though they are good Symptoms and good Beginnings of

of Repentance, yet if they go no further, and do not bring forth the *meet fruits of Repentance*, they are far from being perfect or indeed true Repentance * :

For all these may be in most Sinners, and yet they continue still in their Sins, and be never the better for them

* Μετανοίας ἔργα ἢ τὸ σῆμα μόνον ἐστὶ τῆς ἀμαρτίας, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ φέρειν πάντας καὶ τινὲς τούτων ὅσον ἀποδείξεις καὶ τινὲς ἐναντίας ὄντων. Theod. in Isa. c. 30.

in their lives : And there are very few Sinners, I believe, that have not these now and then in their Minds, and do not sometimes Repent after this fashion ; they are often convinced of their Evil Courses, and their Consciences accuse them for their Sins, and they find a great deal of trouble and disquiet in themselves upon the account of them, and they cannot but look back upon what they have done with sorrow and trouble, and with some kind of dread and fear ; and when they bethink themselves they know they are in a bad state, and they cannot but be melancholly and dissatisfied with themselves, and have some faint wishes that they had done otherwise, and some short and ineffectual Purposes and Resolutions to live otherwise sometime hereafter, and to become better at some convenient Season ; but before that comes, the Temptation is again offered, the Sin and the Company invites, the melancholly and the thoughtful mood is gone off, the dark and gloomy, and cloudy weather that hung over his Soul, is cleared up and dispersed, and the Man falls to his Sins as fresh and as briskly as ever, and he is never the better for that short fit of Repentance that came upon him : It is quickly gone

gone off, and he is rid of his Sorrow, and his good Purposes, but not at all of his Sins. And though it should happen again to return upon him, as it will indeed, and he cannot well prevent it, yet he can put it off again by the same means, and can be wicked still for all these fits and qualms of Conscience that are apt now and then to come over his Mind; the Man is not made much better by all these, but his Sins still prevail upon him, and he still commits them, and is by no means brought off from them. As long as he is not, how little he can be said to Repent, I shall now shew by examining all those parts of Repentance, without this.

1. Let's consider the Sinner in sorrow and tears for his Sins, and in some trouble and contrition of Mind for them. This the Apostle assures us is not perfect Repentance; 'tis not the thing it self, but 'tis that which is only a likely and a good means to produce it, *Godly sorrow worketh Repentance not to be Repented of*, 2 Cor. 7. 10. but if it do not work that, if it do not bring a Man to repent and leave his Sins, though he lament and weep over them, and when he is fall'n into any foul Sin, do only childishly cry over it, and not wash and make himself clean, as the Prophet expresses it, *Isa.* 1. 16. and put away the evil of his doings, when he is thus troubled for them, he is but little the better for all his sorrow, and all his tears are but feigned and hypocritical without that. Though he is sorry for his Sins, yet he will not part with them, but he still retains so much love for them, that through his very tears, he still looks kindly upon them, and will by no means

means leave them; he is rather sorry that he cannot keep them with more content and satisfaction to himself, but yet keep them he will, however troublesome and uneasie they may be now and then to him. Like *Herod* who was exceeding sorry that he must gratifie his *Herodias* in what she required of him, *Mark* 6. 26. but yet he did it for all his sorrow. Men may see reason upon some account to be sorry for their Sins; there are some Considerations that will always trouble their Minds in the commission of them; there are some Evils and Inconveniencies that do unavoidably attend them; but yet there are other Considerations of Pleasure or Profit, or the like, that do still prevail over those, and so make them commit them: And though they are sorry after they have done them, as 'tis very hard to suppose they should not, yet there are other things that still overcome them, and the Temptation of something else, notwithstanding this, is too hard and powerful for them. Sin cannot be brought forth without some pangs and uneasiness after it, but yet the fancied pleasure inclines the Sinner to return again to it; and though he finds and experiences some bitterness in it after he has swallowed it, yet the sweet morsel is so pleasant to him, that he will not refuse or abstain from it for all that. And thus, what is a Man the better for all his sorrow, who is only sorry that he cannot sin without some trouble, but yet is still resolved to sin with it, and after all his pretended sorrow for his Sins, is so well pleased with them, that he yet lives in them. Repentance is not the meer dropping a few brackish tears over our Sins, or venting

ing a few hollow and empty sighs upon the remembrance of them, but 'tis an actual leaving and forsaking of them, which is the only sign that we are sorry for them in good earnest.

2. A Man may be under great conviction of Mind of the evil of Sin, and of the ill state he is in, as well as great remorse and compunction of Heart for it, and yet not have true and perfect Repentance: For most Sinners have that some time or other, unless they are perfectly hardened and brought to a senselessness of Mind, and a stupidity of Conscience. They cannot but sin with some remorse, and have some twitches and vellications of Conscience, and condemn that in their Minds, which yet they may practice in their Lives. Few Men can go on so easily and comfortably in their Sins, but their Consciences will sometimes fly in their faces, and rise up against them: And this is so far from lessening or abating them, that 'tis one of the greatest aggravations of the guilt of them, if they still continue thus to commit them against their Consciences, and against the inward sense of their own Minds.

No Man that does in the least consider, but must know what a sad and desperate state he is in whilst he is Wicked and Impenitent, but 'tis not the meer knowing and being sensible of this will bring him out of it, no more than a Man that is Sick, and finds an inward weakness within him, or that feels himself mortally wounded, must by so doing become well, and be immediately Cured. This in all reason should make him presently use all means he can to be so: But 'tis not the meer sense of his danger that makes

makes him safe, it should awaken him to do all he can to avoid it, and when he sees it so plainly before him, not to venture into it with his Eyes open: But 'tis plain that most Sinners do this; they know their Sins lead to the paths of Death, and that their ways tend to Misery and Destruction, and yet they are still so mad as to walk in them, and therefore they are said in Scripture to *love Death*, and to *choose Destruction*, because they love and choose that which they know and are sensible will bring those. The charms of Vice do so fascinate and bewitch them, that they take down the pleasant Poyson, and eat of the forbidden Fruit, though they know they are both deadly; and their Lusts have such power over them that they will still cleave to them, tho' they know they shall perish in their embraces. So that if Men be never so sensible of their danger, and never so much convicted of their ill state, by reason of their Sins, yet if this does not make them leave them, 'tis a sign they love them so well, that they will boldly venture all for them, and never be brought to part with them whatever shall come of it. But,

3. A Sinner may sometimes resolve and purpose to leave his Sins, and that very sincerely too, and yet his Repentance may not be perfect; for the thing is not done by a Mans meer resolving to do it, though never so sincerely. And Repentance is a different thing from a Mans resolving to Repent. A Man may be very Poor, who resolves to be Rich, and very Ignorant, who resolves to be a Scholar, and though the thing be never so much in his power, yet till he does that which he resolves, he may be in
the

the same condition he was in before. His resolution indeed may put him upon doing the thing he resolves, but till he does it, he is where he was. As a Man that is out of his way, and resolves, upon finding he is so, to turn back, and to betake himself to the right path: This his resolution does but at the most stop him in his wrong course, and till he does really turn, and go back, and get into the right way, according as he resolved, he is in the wrong way still. Resolution is a good principle of acting, and necessary to put a Man upon it, but till we really act upon it, 'tis not our resolution to do the thing is doing it; and God, I am sure, requires us to Repent, and not only to resolve to do it. It would be very happy if a Sinner could be brought thus far, to resolve in good earnest to Repent, there would be then great hopes of him; but he must do more than resolve, or else he is not much the better. There are many idle, and hasty, and ungrounded Resolvers, who do very heartily and sincerely, as they think, purpose and intend to leave their Sins, especially upon their Beds of Sickness, and when they are under some present Judgment, or the fear of Death, but when these are over, their Resolutions are so too; so that there is but little regard to be made of Mens Resolutions, unless they are put into act, and made good by a subsequent course of actions; without this no Man can tell whether the temper and habit of his Mind be altered, and whether it be not a sudden thought newly started in his Mind, which his awakened Reason for the present suggests to him, and so he yields to it, rather than a lasting Prin-

Principle that will dwell upon his Soul, and make a lasting Impression upon his Will and Affections : For Mens Reason may be perswaded for a little time, when they obly consult with that, but they will be quickly drawn off from that, when their Lusts and Affections are again taken in, and the stubborn Will will be quickly too hard for the weak Understanding. Hence it is that a Sinner so often changes his Mind, and he resolves sometimes to be good from the short conviction of his Reason, but is quickly bad again from the prevalency of his Lusts and Affections. So that it requires some time, and several acts, to fix and settle a Mans own Mind, and it is impossible it can be changed and altered by a sudden resolution, without some tryal and many repeated acts, that shall keep it to what it resolves ; it must stand bent, as it were, that way some time till its resolution become habitual, or else it will be apt to restore it self again by a kind of Elasticity, and a motion of restitution to its former temper and inclinations. When the Will has grown crooked by a long custom and habit of Sin, it will not be set streight again by a sudden resolution ; that may a little bend it the other way for a time, but it will return again to its former position, unless it be kept right by many new acts that bring it by degrees to a new habit. If a Mans Mind indeed were fully changed, and he that had a bad Mind before, had now a good one ; this I should not doubt but would make him Happy, and be true Repentance. But there goes more to do this than a sudden resolution. The old habits of Sin must be driven out,

out, and they must be driven out the same way that they came in, that is, by contrary acts, and by a long course of other practices; they must be unwound or unravell'd as it were by degrees, and the Mind cannot get loose from them but by this course; and therefore it must not only resolve within it self, but it must make good, and confirm, and strengthen its resolution by frequent practices, or else it can neither attain to any habit of Goodness, nor break off from a habit of Wickedness. The ways of Vertue and Vice are not so near to one another that a Man may take a sudden jump out of the one into the other by a sudden resolution, but they are like two contrary ways, that a Man who is got into one, must go back again, and take over a great many steps, before he gets into the other. And as I said before, 'tis not his resolving that he will do this which sets him in the other way, but he must walk back as well as resolve, and he must move and keep on till he comes right. Meer resolving is at most no more than turning his face t'other way; but if he only does so, and stands idly resolving, he will be but little the nearer to his Journeys end: And to be sure if he goes back again, and breaks his resolutions, and sometimes walks one way, and sometimes the other, as many a Sinner does, who is uncertainly divided between his good and his bad resolutions, and sometimes follows one, and sometimes the other, he is very far from true Repentance, to make which there must be nothing less than an actual forsaking of every Sin, and an amendment of every evil way, which are *fruits meet for Repentance*, or the worthy fruits of

Repentance, which both *John the Baptist* and *Paul* speak of.

CHAP. II.

The Motives to Repentance.

HAVING described the Nature, and fixt the true Notion of Repentance, which is *laying the foundation of Repentance*, in *St. Paul's* phrase, *Heb. 6. 1.* on which, after the old Rubbish is taken away, a good Life should be Built, and all the goodly structure of Christian Vertues could be erected. I come now to propose the motives and Encouragements to perswade us to this great Duty, and they are as many, and great, as there are obligations to Vertue and Religion, and dissuasives from Vice and Wickedness. For Repentance is but a *Return* to Vertue, and *Leaving Sin*, and tho' the passage from one to the other may not be so pleasant and delightful, but like the *Israelites*, we must pass through a Wilderness, through a vale of Sorrow, and a course of Contrition and Humiliation, yet Vertue is the happy Land flowing with delights, and all manner of good things; and Vice is a more than *Egyptian* Servitude and slavery, which he is mad that will not get out of, or that any way hankers again after it, after the Garlick and Onions, the sordid Pleasures and Enjoyments of it. I shall first examine the Temptations and Enticements to Sin, and

expose the false Reasonings and Arguments by which Men are drawn into that ; then offer the Motives and greater Arguments to Repentance, both from the Nature and Reason of the thing, and from the Gospel or Christianity.

S E C T. I.

Of the Enticements to Sin.

THE Enticements and Temptations to Sin and Wickedness are so great and many, that if we should judge of them by the effect and power which they have upon Mankind, they are much stronger than the Motives and Arguments to Vertue and a Good Life ; for we see they prevail upon more than the other do. Whole crowds follow the one, and are drawn by them into the broad way of Vice, whilst Vertue has but a small party who walk in her narrow path and are perswaded to keep closely to it. Now surely there must be some mighty and powerful charms in Vice that make it so generally taken with most Men ; there must be some secret and prevailing Reasons that bring them over, and engage them so firmly on that side, and make Vertue so generally forsaken and deserted. Men are Rational Creatures and free Agents, they have a power to consider and choose what is best for them, what tends most to please and delight and make them happy, and they must be greatly imposed upon if they choose that which tends only to make them miserable. God lets Life

and Death before them, as *Moses* before the *Jews*, *Deut.* 30. 15. and it must be great Madness to choose the worser part, and what one would think it impossible for any Man to do, if his Reason were not cheated and deceived with false appearances of good in it, and it were not represented to him in such a false light, and such false colours, as made it seem quite otherwise than it is in its own Nature: For no Man can choose Evil as Evil, naked in it self, and with its own ugliness and deformity about it, but it must be drest up under the shew of Good, and painted and decked up in a meretricious dress, to hide its Native and abominable Filthiness. Mens Imaginations must be deluded, and so their Reason deceived and imposed upon by the Temptations to Sin; and there must be a great many false reasonings used to entice them to it, or else so many who have thoughts about them, and who cannot do any thing without thinking some way or other, could never be drawn over to consent to it, and to commit it.

Now the chief Delusions, and false Reasonings and Perswasions by which Men are drawn into Sin, for there must be some such process in their Minds, are such as these following.

1. They see and feel the present Good of their Sins, and the after Evil is so uncertain or so remote that they know not what to think of it, and so are not much influenced by it, for they think it unreasonable to part with the present Pleasure, and the certain Profit which their Sins afford them, for an unknown, and unseen, and unconceived Pleasure and Happiness, they know

not when or where ; they find and feel most Vices very grateful to their Natural Appetites, and outward Senses, and they are not such scolds as to be perswaded out of those, nor to put a force and restraint upon Nature and its proper enjoyments. Vertue tyes them up to such severe, and hard, and unnatural restraints, as they cannot endure ; its Mortifications and Self-denials are very uneasie to Flesh and Blood, and they look upon its Rules and Precepts as the morose dictates of peevish and melancholly Men, who cannot so well enjoy what others do, and therefore talk against the Liberties and Freedoms of Human Nature, and fright Men from the Pleasures and Enjoyments of Sin here, with the Terrors of another World, and imaginary Dangers hereafter.

Is it then so very certain that Vice is so pleasant here ? So desirable and comfortable upon the account of present enjoyment, and that its punishment hereafter is so unknown and uncertain ? That 'tis not to be taken into consideration, nor worth being more minded than it is by these Sinners, do they never think of Dying ? Or are they possessed with such a frenzy as to hope they shall live always, or that three or fourscore Years will never be run out, though few live so long, and they perhaps have lived above half that time, and see how quickly it is gone, and then will any Man in his wits venture to be Miserable for ever, for the Pleasures or Profits of Sin which are but for a Season, were they never so great ? If there were a much greater uncertainty about another World than there is, yet who would run so dreadful a hazard, who
would

would put so great a matter to such a dangerous venture? Were not the evidence we have of a future state from Nature, from Revelation, from the Resurrection of Christ, nay from the belief of all Mankind so strong as it is, so that not only whatever the *Jews* or the Christians have believed and witnessed down through all Ages must pass for a Fable, if it be not true, but what all Wise Men have ever believed about a God and Religion, must be a meer Dream and *Chimera*: Yet however, no Man can ever be sure but that there is another World, he can have no positive Proof or Demonstration that there is not, and were there no more in it but that there may be such a thing, which the greatest Atheist or Sceptical Infidel cannot pretend to deny, yet this might be enough to keep him from running upon so dreadful, though meerly possible danger, and exposing himself to such extream but irrecoverable Mischief, especially for the poor and pitiful Temptations of Sin at present. For alas however Pleasant and Delightful they may imagine them, yet they are generally mistaken, and there is more true Pleasure and Comfort, a thousand times, to be found in a Life of Vertue and Religion than in the most tempring Wickedness, and the most gustful Sensuality: For which yields most present Pleasure and Comfort of Life, a sound and healthful Body, a fair and good Reputation, a quiet and easie Mind, or a shattered and rotten Carcass, a scandalous and infamous Life, a guilty, and disordered, and distracted Conscience? Are not most of the Pleasures of Sin not only short but sickly? That have a sharp and poysonous sting hid un-

der all their sweetness, so that however they go off to the Palate, yet they are very bitter after they are gone down; whereas the Pleasures of Vertue are clear, and pure, and lasting, not mixt with any of those dregs which foul and embitter Sin, but purified from all the Sediment and the Lees that are at the bottom of Sensuality and Wickedness. Religion does not deny us any truly Natural and proper Pleasure and Enjoyment, but only keeps us within the bounds of Innocency and Vertue, within which compass a Man may enjoy all the Pleasure that he can wish, or was made for. It does not by its Rules of Mortification and Self-denial destroy or cut off any Natural Appetite, or true part of us; that is not the meaning of *cutting off a right Hand, or plucking out a right Eye, Matth. 5. 29, 30.* but only to destroy the unnatural Excesses, to cut off the vicious Corruptions, to take away the depraved and inordinate Affections and Lusts, that will grow too strong and unruly, without a wise Conduct and Government of our selves by the Rules of Vertue and the Restraints of Reason and Religion; and would any Man think fit to have those let loose, and have the reins thrown upon their neck without any check or controul? Will he complain of the severity of Religion, and the loss of his Natural Freedom by the restraints of morose and peevish Vertue, as he calls it, if he be not allowed the full swinge of his Lusts, and the gratifying of his immoderate Passions and Desires in all manner of Instances? Then adieu not only to the government of Vertue and Religion, but the government of all Human Laws and
Worldly

Worldly Wisdom, which for the conveniency of this World, and the Peace, Quiet and Comfort of this present Life, has thought fit to keep Mens Lusts and Passions within such bounds under the severest Penalties, and to prohibit the same Sins under the Punishments of this World, that God has done under the far greater Punishments of another; for nothing is more pernicious and destructive to the Welfare of a Kingdom, as well as of particular Men, then Licentiousness and Debauchery, which besides the immediate Judgments of God upon it, does by its own Nature bring a thousand present Miseries and known Evils along with it, besides the unknown and unspeakable Miseries that attend it in another World.

Can any Sinner deny this, when he seriously thinks and considers of it? Does not his own Observation, and his own Experience, by which I hope he will be instructed if by nothing else, teach him that this is the Nature of Sin? That as 'tis a common Pest and Plague to the World, and to Mankind in general, so 'tis generally a Disease to his Body, a Moth and Canker to his Estate, and a Worm to his Conscience: Whereas Vertue is *Health and Soundness to his Body, Life to his Soul, and Grace to his Neck*, as the Wise Man observes, *That length of days are in her Right hand, and in her Left Hand riches and honour. That she is a tree of Life to them that lay hold upon her, and happy is every one that retaineth her, Prov. 3. 16, 17, 18, 22.* This true Notion of Vertue, which is not an empty Panegyrick, but a strict Truth founded in Nature, that will always be true of it, and that all Wise Men

will find to be so, this will sufficiently answer the first and greatest Temptation by which Sin entices and allures unthinking Men with the bait of present Pleasures and Enjoyments. But,

2. The next greatest Temptation to Sin is that of Example, which is so strong and powerful that few can resist it, who love to be modish and in the fashion, as too many Vices generally are, and therefore are more taking upon that account, and lose their reproach and shame due to them, by the great Party and Number they have on their side, which otherwise would sneak and be confounded if they stood alone ; but when so many are brought over to them, others follow if it be only for Company ; and many Men are drawn in even contrary to their Inclinations, by the Example of others, because they do not care to be singular, nor to be reproached for being so, but are willing to do what they see so many others do, and hope they shall fare as well as they, and escape all the seeming dangers of their Sins, both here and hereafter, as well as the rest of their Neighbours, or the great number of their fellow Sinners. Now this, however common and powerful it be, yet is the most unreasonable thing in the World ; for is any Man in another case willing to be Sick, or to Dye, for Company ? Is any so easie or so complaisant as to pledge another in a Cup of Poyson ? Or would he not stop the mad Frolick when he saw the rest of the Company drop down Dead before him ? Is any Man unwilling to avoid the Plague if he can, because there is a general Infection, and because so many of his Neighbours or his

Acquaintance have Dyed of it ? Would any refuse the saving his Life, and escaping if he could upon a Plank, because the rest of his Company are sinking and drowning ? Did Men think it as much worth their while to save their Souls as their Lives, how many others soever lost them, had they as just and terrible apprehensions of their own Damnation as they have of their Dying, this Temptation of Example and Company would be quickly taken off, and signifie nothing : For alas, what comfort will it be in the Flames of Hell to hear so many others roaring and howling in them ? To hear their hideous Cryes, and Tortures, and Lamentations, will not abate their own, but rather increase them ; therefore the Rich Man in the Parable, *Luke 16. 28.* did not desire the Company of his Brethren there, but rather sought to prevent their coming into *that place of Torment.* The Devils indeed, from the unaccountable Malice of their Nature, tempt others to be as Wicked and as Miserable as themselves, and every one does their work who entices another to any Sin, but this will not ease their Pains but augment them, by adding more Mischiefe, and so more Guilt to them.

No Man who knows what it is to be Happy, but must wish to be so, tho' he were alone ; and no Man who knows that Vertue alone is the way to be Happy, but must choose to be Vertuous though he saw never so many others Wicked ; let them reproach and laugh at him as long as they please for a Man singular and by himself ; let them count his Life Folly for being so strict and so precise, if it be, in the
great

great matters of Vertue, for not Drinking to the utmost Pitch, not daring to Swear the least Oath as other Gentlemen do, not running into any the same excess of Riot, or customary Wickedness, but living up strictly to the Rules of the Gospel, and the Terms of Salvation there laid down, without any such abatements as the loose Opinions or the loose Practices of others are willing to put upon them, since God will not alter his Methods or Judgments by any of those, let them, I say, Condemn or Deride him never so much for this, and call him precise Fool, or formal Saint, or the like, yet no Man that knows the good of Vertue will be laughed out of it by a nick-name, or be ashamed of being singular in that any more than in any other excellency of Learning or Knowledge above others ; and I suppose none of those who are so much against Singularity, but would be willing to be Rich though never so many others were Poor, and why not then to be Vertuous, which is ten times more valuable, though never so many others were Vitious. Example indeed is very prevailing, and like a Contagion spreads and diffuseth it self very secretly and insensibly, and infects all about it, because it begets the same Thoughts, the same false Principles, and so makes Men have less sense of the evil of Sin, and of the danger of it, but where a Man has fixt and steddly thoughts of those, there the power of Example and the Temptation of it to unwary and unsetled Minds, is taken off and removed.

Having examined those Enticements and Temptations by which Men are generally deluded

ed into the deceitfulness of Sin, and exposed the false Reasonings and Sophistry, which impose upon them, and perswade them to commit it; I shall now offer the many Motives and Encouragements, and greater Arguments, to make Men leave their Sins, and perswade them to Repentance. And here I shall,

- I. Consider the Motives to Repentance from the Reason and Nature of the thing.
- II. Those which are peculiar to Revelation and proper to Christianity, of which this is the great Duty.

S E C T. II.

Motives to Repentance from Reason.

THE Motives to Repentance from the Reason and Nature of the thing, such as would perswade a Wise Heathen, or any Man of Sense and Understanding, to Repent, after he had been Foolish and Wicked, *These* must be taken from the manifold Evil and Mischief of his Sins and Vices, which though they invited him at first with the appearing Charms of Pleasure, or some other seeming good, yet now he finds upon a better Consideration, and a serious Reflection upon them, that they are Poysonous and Bitter, Painful and Irksome, and have a thousand ill Consequences and shameful Effects that do necessarily attend them, and are the Cursed Fruit that spring out of that root of Bitterness; that though they are a little pleasant

fant to the taste, yet they are Gall and Worm-wood i'the Stomach ; and like the Grapes of Sodom, though they look fair to the Eye, yet they are but Bitter and Poysonous, *as the Poyson of Dragons, and the Venome of Asps, Deut. 32. 33.* and that there was little or no fruit in those things whereof he is now ashamed, and besides, *that the end of those things is death, Rom. 6. 21.* That he has Naturally an inward Fear and Dread of a Divine Nemesis and Vengeance hanging over his head, and of some grievous Punishment or Evil befalling him for any ill thing he has done, and that he finds by his own wiser Thoughts and better Observations, now that he has given himself leave to think, and to consider things over again with calm Thoughts and sober Reason, after that his Lusts are cool, and his Passions more sedate, that Sin is but disguised Misery, that it is the Mother of all Evil and Mischief, as it is the Daughter of Folly and Inconsideration, that the most tempting Vice is but as a Pandar, *whose ways lead to Death and Destruction, Prov. 3. 17.* and that Vertue is the only true way to Comfort and Happiness ; *That the ways of that are ways of pleasantness, and all its paths are peace, ver. 3.* and that the effect of it is *quietness and assurance for ever, Isa. 32. 17.* So that we must suppose such an one brought to Repentance by such Considerations, and by such a Method as this following.

1. He is brought to think and consider by some Accident, Affliction or Judgment, by Sicknes or the fear of Death, or something that awakens his Mind, and the powers of Reason and Thinking, which rouze his stupid and senseless

self Soul, and excites his Lethargick drowsie
 faculties, dozed with Brutishness and Sensuality,
 and which does, in the Scripture Phrase, *bring*
him to himself, Luke 15. 17. This is generally
 done not only by the Grace of God working
 inwardly upon his Mind, but by something else
 also at the same time from without, which
 touches him to the quick, and *enters* like *Joseph's*
Fetters even *into his Soul*, and with its piercing
 keenness stimulates, and even forces him to at-
 tend and consider, and think, whether he will
 or no, of his Spiritual state and condition, and
 then when he looks about him, he sees what a
 woful State he is in, deep and in the mire of Sin
 and Guilt; to go forward he is afraid, for he
 now sees the dreadful precipice before him,
 which he discerned not before, when he ran
 blind-fold into Sin, or without Sense or Fear
 of Danger, *as the Horse rushes into the Battle*,
 and how to go back he knows not, 'tis so diffi-
 cult, and he is so plunged in the depth of Wick-
 edness, but he sees he must perish inevitably if
 he do not struggle, and do what he can, and
 endeavour to the utmost to get out of his mise-
 rable Condition, so he Prays to God to help
 him, and sadly bewails himself, and laments,
 and weeps over his wretched Case which he
 finds himself in, and has brought himself to :
 He Repents and Grieves for his past Folly, and
 is now willing to Repair and Amend it, and
 to *snatch* himself, if he can, *as a brand out of*
the Fire, and to lay hold upon some Plank that
 may save him from sinking in this dreadful
 storm, wherein he finds he has *ship-wreckt his*
Conscience, and the *Waters are gone over his Soul*,
 and

and he is ready to be swallowed up of the gulph of Destruction, then he makes Vows to Heaven, and whilst the same thoughts continue upon his Mind, resolves to keep them, and if they go not off when the Storm is over, or he do not forget them when he comes to shore, and is set upon dry Land, but these strong Impressions last upon his Mind, and leave a due sense abiding upon his Soul, even when the violent Cause is over, and the Affliction is removed, then he is like to be a good Man, and to Repent in earnest, and these thunder-strokes of Providence may not only startle and rouze him, but as is reported of some Animals, they may make him conceive and bring forth a New and Holy Life, and be available to his true Conversion and Repentance; and I believe this is God's usual way by which he begins to effect this upon most Sinners, by thus bringing them to some serious thinking and considering. It is very great Mercy when God thus checks them in their career, and calls to them by the loud Voice of his Judgments, and thus, as he generally does, puts the first stop to them, and makes them bethink themselves and consider; but then this Method must not only awaken, but keep their Eyes open, and make them see and consider those other Thoughts and Reasons which are the more proper seminal Principles that will be more likely to produce and beget this true Repentance. Such as are,

2. In the second place, a serious Reflection and thorough conviction of the Evil that is in Sin, and of the real Good of Vertue, as the only thing which can make us truly happy; for

till Men have brought themselves to be fully perswaded and convinced of this, and to believe it as firmly as they do any truth in Mathematicks, or any other Science, they will never be brought truly to Repent, that is, to dislike, and hate, and renounce the one, and heartily to love, and pursue, and embrace the other; for Men will still love their Sins, and hanker after them, and be ready to comply and close with them upon every Occasion; if they only fall out with them sometimes, as Lovers do with what they like and admire, and though there may be some Bickerings between them, and some Penitential Passions and Resentments now and then, yet they may still have their Heart, if they do not upon wise Observations and thorough Convictions, believe them to be enemies to their Welfare and Happiness, to the comfort of their Lives here, and their Eternal Salvation hereafter, and that they get nothing by them but Poor, and Empty, and Sickly Pleasures, but that they bring substantial Misery, and bitter Remorse and Anguish of Mind, and a thousand Mischiefs and Inconveniencies along with them at present, besides the terrible Hazards and Dangers of another World, so that they are by no means to be loved or chosen, if we love our selves, or choose our own Happiness: For we must bring it to this, if we would be steady and certain, to the first Principles of Self-preservation, and a desire of our own Happiness, which lyes at the root of our Nature, and what we shall always act upon, if we rightly understand it, and do not grossly err and mistake about it, and a few wise Observations,

tions, and a little sober thinking and considering will easily satisfy us, and fully convince us, that Vice is the certain cause of misery to us, and that Vertue is the only way to be truly Easie and Happy. The Sinner will be convinced of this by his own experience, when he reflects upon his past Follies, and sees how little he has got by his Sins but Shame and Sorrow, and Trouble of Mind, perhaps a Sickly and Diseased Body, and a wasted Estate, and wretched Beggery, and every thing that shall make him Miserable in this World, before he goes to the greater Misery of another. For do we not dayly see this, how one Man brings himself by his Sins to a morsel of Bread, how he Shipwrecks his Fortunes as well as his Conscience, by Luxury and Prodigality, another consumes his Body as well as his Estate by Debauchery, Lust and Intemperance; by these *they sin*, as the Apostle remarks, *against their own Bodies* as well as against their Souls; they make them bear the Scars and Marks of their Sins upon them, and become Martyrs in the Devils Service, and endure often more torture of Body for their Sins, than other Martyrs have done for their Religion; sacrifice their Lives to them, and by living too fast, as they call it, bring an untimely Death upon themselves, and are in so much haste sometimes to Dye, that their Bodies often Rot before they come into their Graves. If these Mischiefs do not follow all Sins, yet some others do, and the greatest of all is inseparable from them, which is Torment and Anguish of Conscience, and Pain and Uneasiness of Mind, which every Man feels;

feels, unless his Conscience be stupified and mortified, which is a worse state than the other, upon the commission of any great Sin, and this is ten times greater than any fancied pleasure in it: This is a Sting, a Wound, a Trick upon the most tender part of a Mans Soul,

Dart struck through his Liver, a Worm gnawing upon his Vitals; nothing is so close and so cutting a Pain and Misery as a Mans own ill Conscience, when it is let loose upon him, and like a Fury falls upon him with its utmost Rage, lashes him with its Snaky Whips, and burns him with its fiery Torches, 'tis then a Devil let loose, and a Hell kindled within his own bosom. They who have felt but a little of it, know it is more exquisite Pain than any belongs to the Body, and what is it then to endure this for ever, and lye under that, and the further anger of God to all Eternity. Oh Madness and Folly, that wants a name, that will do this for any Sin whatever! Oh the dreadful evil of Sin, that brings all this, and so many other Mischiefs upon us! But,

3. Vertue on the contrary, has a thousand comforts, Blessings and Goods, belonging to it, which should make us love it as we do ourselves, and choose it as heartily and firmly as we do our own Happiness. When we rightly understand and consider it, we shall find Reason to do so; that neither disturbs our Mind, nor weakens our Body, nor squanders away our estate, nor brings any Reproach and Discredit along with it, as Vice generally does; and takes away no real Good, or true Pleasure,

or proper Enjoyment from us, but it allows us all that we can desire, or that our Nature was made for, within the due Bounds and Limits of our Duty, and within those we may enjoy as much Vertuously and Innocently, as the greatest Liberty and Debauchery can afford the Sinner. Vertue does not destroy our Pleasures, but refines and purifies them, and so makes them sweeter and better, and draws them off from the Filthiness, and Sediment, and Bitterness that lyes always at the bottom of all Sinful Pleasures and Enjoyments.

No Man ever Repented of his Vertues, or was sorry that he had done a good Action, but he finds great Comfort and Satisfaction within himself when he reflects upon it, and it is a prop and stay to his Mind, and he rests securely upon it, and is chearful, confident, and erect under all Accidents, and all Dangers and Difficulties whatsoever. His Heart standeth right, and approveth it self to God, and to his own Thoughts, having no ill Designs, no base and mean Ends and Purposes, but such only as are Good and Vertuous, and this gives him great Peace, firmness of Mind, and bravery of Spirit, and he feels an inward strength and vigour in himself, and the constant springs of Joy and Comfort rising up in his own Breast, and overflowing his Soul.

But Vice sneaks and is cowardly, and fills a Man with Fear and Confusion, and all the mean, and little, and uneasie, and tormenting Passions that belong to Human Nature.

Vertue approves it self to our Reason, and agrees

agrees with the native sense of our own Minds, and has a Natural Beauty and Loveliness that commends it to our first Sight and Apprehension, and makes it Amiable and Desirable, Esteemed and Honoured, and Admired by every one, even by those who forsake it, who cannot but be so just to it, as to commend and approve it very often in others.

But Vice has a Natural ugliness and deformity that makes Men ashamed of it after they have committed it, and commit it in Darkeness and Obscurity, and after to deny and extenuate it, as being presently sensible of the Folly and Undecency, and Unreasonableness of it, as having done what they cannot justify, and what presently flies in their faces, if they have not a brow of Brass, and a forehead of Steel. It is contrary and awry to our own Nature, and against the first sense and tenderness of our own Minds, so that great Violence must be used to commit it at first, and great Pain follows upon it. 'Tis a Force, a Rape upon the Virgin-Modesty, and the Natural Sense of Good and Evil that we are Born with.

Vertue has always very good and desirable effects upon us in this Life, as well as great Rewards in another. 'Tis in the Wise Man's Phrase, and in a true literal Sense, *Health to our Navel, and Marrow to our Bones*, Prov. 3. 8. It keeps our Bodies in good plight, neither drains or exhausts them with forced Pleasures, or unruly Passions, nor choaks or suffocates them with immoderate Loads, nor Drowns and Washes them away with Floods of Drink, and Cups of Intemperance.

It brings a *Blessing of God* upon our Estates, and often makes us *Rich* by the help of Industry and Frugality, whilst nothing is so expensive, and so impoverishing as Vice, which spends many times all upon its Lusts, and the hungry Wolf comes often to the door where the Swine and the Goat have been used to dwell. Though Vertue may not always bring abundance, neither is it desirable always to a wise Man, though Solomon puts Riches as the common Blessing in the left hand of Wisdom, Prov. 3. 16. yet it makes a little, that the righteous hath, better than great riches of the ungoaty, Psal. 37. 16.

Honour and a good Name do more certainly belong to Vertue than Riches, and whilst Vice brings a blot and a reproach upon a Mans Credit, Vertue makes him Loved, and Honoured, and Esteemed by all that know him while he lives, and embalms his Name when he is dead, and makes his Memory to be precious.

But above all, it makes a Man truly Easie and Happy within himself; it secures him the Peace and Tranquility of his own Mind, which is the greatest Happiness in the World: So that all Natural Good, and all that is desirable to Human Nature, grows as a proper Fruit out of Vertue, which is the true Root that Naturally brings forth all Good, as Sin does all Evil; and these are so annexed to them by the Nature and Constitution of things as effects to their proper causes, that nothing can cut them off or precide them, and these besides all the superadded Motives of revealed Religion, are by plain Reason and Observation of things,

things, very strong Arguments to bring Men off from Vice to Vertue, *i. e.* to true Repentance.

4 Therefore Fourthly, A wise Man when he comes to reflect and consider, finds that that which hindered him from seeing all this before, was only his foolish Lusts, and his corrupt sensual Inclinations, and his strong Passions, and violent and unreasonable Appetites, which blinded his Reason and clouded his Judgment, and darkened his Understanding, and besorred, intoxicated and bewitched him, *i. e.* by some unaccountable ways hindered him from discerning and considering these things which are so plain and evident, and therefore the reason why he before chose Vice and forsook Vertue, was because he did not see and consider this, nor was so truly convinced of the Evil of Sin, and the Good of Vertue, but now he has quite other Thoughts and Apprehensions about them, and therefore he is changed in his Will and his Affections, by this change wrought in his Mind and his Understanding; and this being a lasting and effectual change upon all the inward Principles of Action, has a necessary influence upon his outward Actions that are always moved and turned by those inward Springs and Wheels within us; for though a Man is still at Liberty, and is under no force and compulsion from without, but acts freely from within himself, yet his Will will follow the last Dictate of his Understanding, and he will not choose Evil as

Evil, when he apprehends it to be so, and he must some way have his Reason corrupted, and judge falsely and erroneously, before he will practice so: *Omnis peccans ignorat*. If he has a true and lively sense of the Good of Vertue abiding upon his Mind, he will not choose Vice again: 'Tis this sense, I doubt not, confirms the Blessed Spirits Above, and will do the Souls of all good Men in Heaven, when they see and know this so perfectly that 'twill be impossible for them to fall; but now we see things Darkly, and judge Weakly, and often change and alter our Minds, as not having such a clear view of things, nor attending so closely to the Dictates of impartial Reason, but our Thoughts are often lured off by the Temptations of the Flesh, and our Minds hearken but to one side, to the false Reasonings and Suggestions of the Devil and our own Lusts, or are surprized with the sudden importunity of a Temptation, before they can recollect themselves. Else no Man could say, *Videō meliora probōq; deteriora sequor*, for we cannot but love and choose Good when we apprehend it, and hate and abhor Evil when it is visible and naked to us. We must therefore strip Vice of its Disguise and its false Colours, and wash off its Paint and Meretricious Charms, and see it as it is in its Deformity and Ugliness, and in the miserable and sad consequences of it, and then we shall hate that which we once loved, and throw away the gilded Poyson, and shake the smooth and shining Viper off of our hands, and cast the rotten Curtizan from our Arms and Embraces.

We

We shall be ashamed that we were so cheated and imposed upon, so deluded by the *deceitfulness of Sin*, that we were so weak as to be governed by our mean Passions and low Inclinations, which are the imperfection and the soft side of our Nature, and that we should not live up to that Reason which is proper to us, and distinguishes us from Brutes, that we should hearken only to the desires of our Senses and our inferiour Appetites, and not to the wise voice and dictates of Reason and Understanding which God had given us. We shall be convinced of the folly of this, and see the many ill effects that have come of it, when we consider rightly, and weigh things impartially, and make Judgment not by our Lusts and Passions, but by right Reason and Wisdom, and shall condemn our selves when we grow cool, for all the mad Frolicks and Extravagancies we committed in the heat of Folly, and shall then feel the Pains and Wounds they gave us, though we were not sensible of them before. Then we shall see that Danger which before we were not duly aware of, and have a dread and terror of that upon our Minds which is the due punishment of our Sins ; for the consciousness of our own Guilt will fill us with terrible Fears, and we shall find the *Burden greater than we can bear*, but how fully to get rid of it is a defect, and a *desideratum* in Natural Religion, and therefore we must go further than that for the other Motives to Repentance, which are fetcht from Revelation, and from the Gospel and Christianity under which God now commandeth

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all men to Repent, as St. Paul says, Acts 17. 30. now more than heretofore, namely, by some more proper and peculiar Motives, greater than Mankind had before to encourage them to this Duty, such as I shall come now to consider, and shall offer very largely.

S E C T. III.

Motives to Repentance from the Gospel.

1. **N**OW then by Revelation and the Gospel we have an assurance of God's Pardoning us upon our Repentance, which the World could not have without a Revelation, for this depends upon the free Will, and arbitrary Pleasure of God, to which he is not obliged by his Essential and Natural Goodness, and of which we cannot be certainly assured without an express Promise and Divine Revelation. Nature taught all Mankind that there was a God, the knowledge of this is not to be had from Revelation, but must be supposed as previous and antecedent to it; we learn it not from the Bible, but from the great Volume of Nature that lyes every where written before us with the plainest Marks of an Infinite, and Perfect, and Wise God, and in that, the Characters of his Goodness are as legible as these of his Power and Wisdom, by making his Sun to shine on the evil and on the good, and sending Rain on the just and the unjust, and by other the Natural Provisions and Contrivances for the good of his

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Creatures, God has shown himself to be no Evil and Malicious Principle, as some *Hereticks* imagined, but a Being of Goodness, which is an Essential Perfection of his Nature, and as Natural and Necessary to him as his very Being. And this Goodness belong to him not only as a Creator but a Governour, and obliges him not to condemn an innocent Creature, nor inflict more Misery upon it than he gives it Good by its Being. His Natural Justice, as well as his Goodness, hinders him from doing any injury by his Power, or acting contrary to the unalterable Rules of Right and Wrong, from dooming Men to Misery by an Eternal Decree before they had offended him, from punishing any one more than he deserves, for the fault of another, and for any fault of its own that was wholly inevitable and unavoidable, but after Men have wilfully offended God, and been guilty of voluntary Crimes, and presumptuous Disobedience against his known and Righteous Laws, and so fallen under his just Anger and Displeasure, that then he should not punish them as they deserve, this his Natural Goodness does no way require of him; if it did, then he could never punish any Sin, nor make any use of the Sword of Justice, but his Goodness would tye up his hands, and put a necessary and constant restraint upon him, which would make it wholly inconsistent with his other Attributes, and with his wise Government of the World, in order to which it is more necessary to punish Sin than to forgive it. If it be not inconsistent then with Goodness to punish Sin, it is

is not necessary from that, it should be forgiven, and God is not obliged to do this from his Essential or Natural Goodness, but it depends upon a more Free and Arbitrary Grace and Goodness that was not included in the Natural Knowledge of God, or in the Notion of the Divine Goodness, as a necessary part of it, and so not knowable by the Light of Nature. God's Goodness is over all his Works, and yet, so far as we know, he never offered forgiveness to a great number of his Creatures when they once rebelled against him, and yet the Devils themselves can bring no just impeachment against the Divine Goodness notwithstanding that, no more could we have done if God had dealt thus with Mankind, if he had punished us as soon as we wilfully broke his Laws, and never admitted us to Pardon. A good Lawgiver is bound only to give Righteous and Good Laws to his Subjects, and if they break them, they make themselves justly lyable to the punishment that was threatned, and 'tis no more contrary to Goodness to inflict that, then it was at first to threaten it, and though that be very severe and terrible, yet if it exceed not the merit of the Crime, *i. e.* if it be no greater than is necessary for the ends of Government, for that is the only true and full measure by which the proportion of the Fault and the Punishment can be adjusted, 'tis no way contrary to the Goodness of the Governour to see it executed. I do not think he is always obliged to punish by his vindictive Justice, no more than he is obliged to pardon by his Essential Goodness, but here his

his Prerogative takes place, and there is room
either to Pardon or to Punish as he pleases,
without regard to any Law or Obligation. Mercy
which is a relaxing of a Law, is due by no Law,
if it were, it would make void all other Laws,
it would be not a relaxing or an abating of a
Law, but a correcting all other Laws by a Law
that is Superior to them, and so it would be an
Injury or a denying a Legal Right, not to grant
it where that Superior Law required it, but it
is a pure, and arbitrary, and undue Favour
shown to one that has no manner of Right or
Claim to it, which a Supreme Governour, who
has a Power paramount to all Law, may by
vertue of that, grant or deny by the meer Mo-
tion and free Inclination of his own good Plea-
sure. So that Mankind could not know that
God would do this, would be so good as to
forgive their wilful Sins and Offences against
him from his Natural Goodness, nor could have
any certain grounds to be assured of this, but by
his own expresse Promise, and positive Declara-
tion of this his free Grace and good Will to-
wards them. They might have some faint hopes,
and probable surmizes, and small expectations
of this from his Natural Goodness, as Malefa-
ctors may presume and hope such a thing from
the Temper and Disposition of a good Gover-
nour, but they could not necessarily conclude
it, or be any way ascertained of it. They might
have such an uncertain encouragement to hope
this, as the Men of *Niniveh* had, *Jonah* 3. 9.
*Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn
away from his fierce anger, that we perish not;*
and

and this was as high as Mens hopes could rise without a Revelation of God's pardoning them upon Repentance. Their Repentance indeed was the most likely means to turn away his fierce Anger, and the best thing they could do, but they could not be certain that this would succeed and be effectual, but in their greatest Humiliation, and Mourning, and Fasting, they must with a doubtful Heart, and a trembling Hand, offer their Petitions to Heaven, as a condemned Prisoner does to his angry Judge or incensed Prince, not knowing whether he will vouchsafe to hearken to it, or so much as to cast his eye upon it. The greatest encouragement to Repentance, is our being sure that it will obtain our Pardon, and restore us certainly to Favour, and set us right in the Court of Heaven ; and since we that know this can yet very hardly be perswaded to a Duty that is not so very pleasant or so very easie, with what disadvantages must those who knew not this, be brought to it ; with what desponding Fears and uncertain Hopes must the Prodigal, *Luke 15.* take a weary Journey, and return home to his Fathers House, who knew not whether he should be admitted or no when he came there ; with what a doubtful and perplexed Mind, with what weary Paces and dispirited Motions must he take every step thither, when he could not tell what he should meet with at his Journeys end, but had too much reason to fear he should for ever be cast out and excluded, as he might have been by his *good* Father ; and this must be the case of the most penitent Sinner, and of all Mankind, when

when without a Revelation they had no assurance of Pardon, though upon their Repentance, but only an uncertain hope and presumption of it ; but now the greatest Sinner who has lived never so Prodigally and Wickedly, has a thousand times greater encouragements to return, and leave off all his Vicious and Riotous courses of Living, because he is most certainly assured that if he does so, his Heavenly Father will receive him with open Arms, and the heartiest Embraces, and treat him as kindly and indulgently *as if he had served him many Years, neither had transgressed at any time his commandment, ver. 29.* In a word, we have the same encouragements to repent and leave our Sins now under the Gospel, as Rebels have to come in and lay down their Arms when there is a Proclamation of Pardon, and an Act of Indemnity past to all that do so, whereas before there was only an uncertain Presumption of the Princes Mercy, which they could not be sure of without a Revelation.

2. We have not only Pardon given us upon promise now, but granted upon a most valuable Consideration, and founded upon a full Expiation of Guilt and Atonement of Sin by a Sacrifice, the most perfect Sacrifice of the Son of God, and so purchased for us, and made over to us by a Covenant Established and Confirmed by the Blood of Christ. Pardon of Sin is so great a thing, so Princely and so singular a favour, the greatest Act indeed that a Prince can do, and 'tis so desirable, so comfortable to a poor Criminal, than which nothing in the World can

can be more valuable to him, that it can never be too well assured to us, and we can never be too much satisfied in it. Guilt is always so fearful and timorous, so terrible and so uneasy a thing; 'tis such a heavy Load and Burden lying upon a Mans Mind, such a deep wound upon the tenderest part of a Mans Soul, that like a prick upon a Nerve, it puts the whole Man into Convulsions and Agonies, and fills him with unexpressible Pains and Torrures. There is no such rack, no such Hell indeed, as what is set up and kindled in a Mans own Breast by his guilty Conscience, when he is haunted by his own Sins as so many Hellish Fiends; and lastly by them like so many snaky Furies, that poyson and sting him to the very Heart, and his own fears of Vengeance and future Punishment, represent sad and frightful images, like to so many Spectors, always appearing before his Mind, and therefore there is no such Comfort as that which delivers us from Guilt, no such *Δαψηνον*, or Blessed News, as what our Saviour pronounces to a Sinner by the Gospel, *Son be of good chear, thy Sins are forgiven thee*; there is no such anodine as that which plucks out the sting of Sin, and takes away the Pains and the Smartings of a wounded Conscience; that which does this puts not only Oyl into the Wounds, but new Life into the fainting Soul; 'tis like taking a Man off from the Rack or the Wheel, and giving him more Ease than he feels when he has just voided a Stone after a sharp fit. And therefore the Remedy that does this is the most choice, the most precious and valuable thing in the

the World: What that is we now know by the Gospel, but Mankind could not know by Natural Light, what would expiate Sin, and certainly take away Guilt; and therefore the Heathens, though they tryed all means by their Lustrations, Sacrifices, Purgations, and other ways, (for the sense of their Guilt put them upon all attempts to get rid of it) yet they could never find what would certainly do it, but must be still Fearful and Melancholly under their acknowledged Guilt and unatoned Crimes. Whether *thousand of Rams, or ten thousand Rivers of Oyl* would be accepted as a price of their Sins they could not tell, or whether it would not cost more to redeem a Soul, whether if they brought their first-born, and offered the fruit of their Bodies for the Sin of their Souls, or offered up their own Blood, as was sometimes done, 'twould be effectual was very uncertain; but there was nothing they thought too dear it seems, nothing, however cruel either to themselves or others, that they would stick at in hopes to accomplish this. The most barbarous and inhuman Superstition of the Heathen World in offering up their Children to *Molech*; in offering the Sacrifices of Men, which was no unusual thing among them, arose from the great streight and the great darkness they were in, as to the expiation of Guilt, and the atonement of Sin, which was so dreadful, so painful, that they could not bear it, and yet knew not how to remove it. But now God be thanked, we have that which should chear up our Spirits, and put us upon a hearty and a speedy Repentance from all our Sins,

Sins, because upon our doing this, we have the *Blood of Christ*, and the Sacrifice of the *Lamb of God*, to deliver us from all Sin. That which the World was so anxiously, so concernedly, and yet so vainly seeking after before, that is only to be had, and only made known by the Gospel Revelation, the full and perfect, and certain Expiation of Guilt, which is the greatest Argument and Encouragement to Repentance: for without that, 'tis not all our Repentance will take away our past Guilt; 'tis not our greatest Sorrow, or most penitent Tears, will wash away the Stains and Guilt of our Sins, unless they are mixt with, and have all their Vertue from the Blood of Christ; and 'tis not they indeed, or any thing we can do, that has any proper Vertue or Efficacy to do this, but only the Sacrifice of Christ. Repentance is a necessary Disposition and Qualification in us, without which no Sacrifice can be available to us, if it does not as the Scripture speaks, *Purge our Consciences*, and so purifie as well as atone, which is a strong Consideration to enforce this Duty, because without it we lose all the Benefit of this Sacrifice; but 'tis not our Repentance that can either purchase, or procure, or pay for our Pardon, or that can any way challenge, or upon any account merit or pretend a right to it, be it never so exact; for by what rules of Justice does it discharge our past arrears of Wickedness, though we stop now, and run no further on in the Score? What do we more by leaving our Sins, and becoming good now, than we ought always to have done, and always were

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were obliged to? Or how shall we make that which is past and done to be undone as it were, and the old account to be blotted out, and the last Guilt done away? 'Tis only the Meritorious Sacrifice of Christ can do this, and whether God could do this without any Sacrifice I will not dispute, because I know not the Measures of the Divine Government, nor the Secrets of his Wisdom and Counsel, but by a sacrifice it is much better obtained and assured to us, as being granted upon the account of something that was given in stead of it, and that is worth it indeed in fair Justice, for so was the Blood of the Son of God of equal value to the Souls of all Mankind, though I acknowledge it depends upon the free Pleasure of the Governour to accept or refuse such a satisfaction and compensation as was made by that or by any Sacrifice, yet all this being transacted in such a Method, being granted upon Valuable Consideration, and being made over to us by a formal Covenant and standing Agreement, Ratified and Sealed by the blood of Christ, as well as a bare Promise: so that *by all these immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lye, we might have strong consolation, Heb. 6. 18.* We have hereby the greatest Comfort, the highest Satisfaction and Assurance in the World given us, of that which we can never be too much assured of, and which is of the nearest and closest concern to us in the World, the Pardon of our sins, and the Expiation of all our Guilt, which is only to be had, and only fully discovered

vered by the Gospel ; and 'tis indeed the greatest thing in which the Gospel consists, as 'tis different from Natural Religion.

3. From hence, namely, from the Sacrifice and Death of Christ arise new Motives, and fresh and most endearing Obligations to persuade all Christians to repent and leave their Sins. The very Nature of a Sacrifice carries these in it, and was designed to offer the strongest Motives against Sin at the same time that it procures Pardon for it. It is the wisest Expedient that could ever be thought of, to show Justice and Severity, and yet Mercy and Clemency at the same time ; to put a Governour into those two different Capacities, both at once to forgive, and yet to punish the same Person, and to show him to be neither too easie nor yet implacable, but by an admirable temper and mixture of two Vertues and two Passions that seem contrary to one another, it finds out a way to spare the Man, and yet show the greatest displeasure to his Sin ; neither to suffer the Guilty to perish, nor yet the Guilt to be unpunished ; so that hereby the greatness of the Guilt and the greatness of God's Anger, is as visible against the Sin in the sufferings of the Sacrifice, as if the offender himself had suffered ; and we have Reasons to dread it the more, even because it is forgiven us ; but we have stronger Reasons, I think, to do this, out of gratitude to that dear Person who was pleased to become a Sacrifice for us, and from the consideration of his Love, and what he has done for us, we have most particular

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cular and strong engagements to leave our Sins: For 'tis the highest Ingratitude, and the most disobliging thing to him that can be to continue in them, who suffered for this very end, *that he might redeem us from all Iniquity; and cleanse us from all our sins*; 'tis a spoiling all his great undertaking for us, making void his Passion in effect, and making his Blood to be but like common Water spilt upon the ground, and yet 'tis a renewing his Passion at the same time, *A crucifying to our selves the Son of God afresh, and putting him to an open shame, Heb. 6. 6.* 'Tis like running the Spear again into his Side, making new Wounds in his Breast, and pricking him to the very Heart; 'tis doing that which is more displeasing to him than his very Cross, which he willingly underwent rather than we should Live and Dye in our Sins. Look then, O Unworthy and Impenitent Christian, upon thy Saviour offering up himself a Sacrifice for thee, and consider what a mighty Argument his Death is to perswade thee to Repent. Do not thy Sins look terrible when thou seest them through the Blood of Christ, and canst thou have any hopes that God *who spared not his own Son;* will spare thee, if thou continuest in them? And how great are the Characters of his Love, which are there written in his own Blood? and will not so much Love prevail upon thee to leave thy Sins, were there nothing else? How does thy Dying Saviour, with his expanded Arms, and his Head hanging down, beseech and intreat thee, and speak to thee as

it were from every gaping Wound in his broken Body, to forsake and renounce those Sins which Crucified him, and for which he Dyed? And if with the belief of a Christian thou hast but the Passions of a Man, this cannot but strongly affect and move thee.

4. Christianity and the Gospel set forth and shew us the true Nature and Evil of our Sins, in a better Light, and by greater Considerations, than Mankind had before; Sin was always known to be a Weakness and Imperfection of our Nature, gratifying a low Passion, a foolish Humour, a silly Custom, acting in opposition to Reason, and doing things quite contrary to our own wise and calm thoughts, but by Rashness and Inconsideration doing that which we shall afterwards Repent of, and condemn our selves for, and wish we had never done, and what we know will tend more to our Mischief and Prejudice than any real good to us, only it pleases our fancy, and tickles our senses, and is a little grateful to us at present; so that 'tis a sort of Childishness, and want of Understanding, and of Manly and Rational Government of our selves to yield to it, and be overcome by it; this it must appear to any thinking Man, to a Heathen and Philosopher that considered the Nature of things, and the difference of Good and Evil that arose from thence, and therefore that to Repent of it was as necessary as for a Man to act wisely and reasonably, not to do what is Weak and Foolish, below the Nature and the Reason of a Man; but now Christ, besides

besides all this, has represented Sin in more
 ugly and frightful Characters by the Gospel,
 as that which had thrown all Mankind into
 the most miserable and lost Condition, as the
work of the Devil which he came to destroy, as
 the Device and Stratagem of Evil and Malici-
 ous Spirits to destroy us, so that whenever
 we are drawn into Sin, we are drawn in by
 the Devil, and used as Tools by cunning in-
 fernal Fiends, who this way over-reach us,
 and sport themselves in our Ruin and De-
 struction; so that when we think we are en-
 joying our Pleasures, and gratifying our Lusts,
 and using the Freedoms and Liberties of Hu-
 man Nature, we are but inveigled by those
 Devils with the Baits they lay for us, and
 the Snares they every where set to entrap us,
 and are meer Slaves and Properties to their
 Cunning and Cursed Designs upon us, so that
 Christ came to rescue us from those by cal-
 ling us to Repentance, to rescue us from the
 Snares of the Devil, and redeem us from that
 Servitude and Slavery whereby we are led
 captive by him. Christianity better acquaints
 us also with the Nature of Sin and the Evils
 of it, than Nature could by showing us the
 Ruins it had made upon Mankind, and the
 Cost and Expences Heaven was at to repair
 Human Nature; by letting us see the Wret-
 ched and Miserable Estate the Sins of Mankind
 had thrown them into irrecoverably without
 a Saviour. Our Salvation by that stupendous
 and mysterious way makes the greatness of
 our Danger, and the mischief of our Sins,

more evidently known to us, and the whole scheme and contrivance of it contains other Considerations against Sin than Natural Religion could ever have known or suggested; for by this Sin appears further to be so malignant and hateful to God, so detestable and odious in his sight, and so contrary to his wise Government of the World, that he would not pardon it without the Blood of his own Son shed as an Atonement for it, nor forgive it to Mankind without such a valuable Compensation and satisfaction made for it, as that was. Now this demonstrates to us above any thing its abominable and displeasing Nature to God, and that according to the wise Rules and Maxims of his Government, by which he manages the World, it must suffer and be severely punished, and that there was no escaping of this but by an extraordinary contrivance of Divine Wisdom and Mercy, which found out a way by Jesus Christ to save Sinners by Repentance. Sin is a greater Debt, a more deep Provocation to Heaven, a more horrid affront to Divine Power and Authority, a more considerable injury to the good of the World, and to the Justice and Holiness of God, than to be easily forgiven and passed by, as we find by the Mystery of our Redemption, and the Dispensation of Christianity, which shows us above any thing the Nature and Evil of it, and consequently the great Reasons of our Repenting from it.

5. As the Nature and Evil of Sin, so the Consequences and Punishments of it are greater

greater by Christianity ; and Christ by the threatening of those greater Judgments upon it has called us more loudly to Repentance. Nature and the light of Reason, taught all Mankind the Present and Natural Evils that were like so many Curses cleaving to Sin, like *Hercules* his poysoned Shirt clinging to it, and sticking fast about it. God had annexed a World of Evils and mischievous Effects to Vice and Wickedness, by the original Settlement and fundamental Constitution of things ; it was a Disease to the Mind and a Torment to the Conscience, and very often a Disease to the Body and Rottenness to the Bones, a Wound to a Mans Credit, and a Blemish to his good Name, and an Enemy to all his Interests, and to all his Happiness in this World. These plain and necessary effects of Sin Mankind could not but observe, as so many bitter Fruits naturally growing out of it as from a proper Root, and like so many Plagues sent from Heaven steeming out of this *Pandora's* Box : And these Natural Punishments of Sin, and the other as Natural Goods and Rewards of Vertue, were the true Sanction of the Law of Nature. But besides all these, there are a thousand times greater and more additional Evils superadded to our Sins by Christianity, if we do not in time Repent of them ; there are the positive and eternal Evils of Sin in another World ; for I can by no means call the Torments of Hell Natural, which God has revealed to us by the Gospel. How little these were known to the World before, I

might show from the odd fancies of the wisest Heathens about the Transmigration of Souls, and the Revolution of all things within such a period of Years ; and whatever guess they had rather than belief of Punishments for Sin in another World, yet that they should be so great as the Scripture now represents them, and that they should be Eternal, which is the most dreadful part of them, this can only be known from the Revelation and Will of God, who may continue our being, and lengthen or shorten our duration to what time he pleases, and therefore as Christ *has brought Life and Immortality to light by the Gospel*, 2 Tim. 1. 10. so in like manner he has brought Hell and Damnation, and revealed such intolerable and greater Punishments to Sin than the World knew before, as cannot but fright the most daring Sinner, and make the fondest Sensualist part with his Lusts, when he considers that all their Tempting Charms, and enticing Gayety, and Momentary Pleasures, shall end in nothing but Hellish Torments, Unquenchable Flames, and Eternal Howlings and Gnashings of Teeth, which must be owned to be a thousand times greater than all the Known, and Visible, and Natural Evils of Sin.

S E C T. IV.

Motives to Repentance from the Consideration of Hell.

NOW because this is the greatest deterrent from Sin imaginable, and consequently the greatest motive to Repentance that can possibly be given ; for nothing is so strong and powerful upon most Men as their Fears, which is the quickest and strongest Passion in Human Nature, and is apt to make a very great Impression where nothing else will, and nothing can be so much an Object of our fear, as Hell and Eternal Misery, which is the utmost and most dreadful Evil that can be either felt or imagined. I shall particularly and largely offer and represent it to the Sinners thoughts, both as to its Nature, consisting in the greatest Pains and Torments of Body and Mind, and in the most wretched and miserable State and Condition, and as all this is Eternal and shall never have end : Both which, if heartily believ'd and seriously consider'd, would have a mighty power and almost irresistible force to bring Men off from their greatest Sins.

I. Then let us consider its Nature, as consisting of the greatest Pains and Torments both of Body and Mind, and in the most Wretched and Miserable State and Condition. I shall not attempt

attempt fully to describe, or draw a Picture of this place of Torments, our Imagination is to be help'd out with all the known Instances of Misery, and so to form an Idea of that future, and unknown, and invisible one : It is certain it must be adapted to those two parts of which we consist, our Bodies and our Minds, and what are the proper Evils to either of those we very well know, sensible Pain and great Anguish and Sorrow, and other tormenting Passions, and these we must suppose in the highest degree to belong to Hellish Misery ; for as Heaven is the utmost good our Natures can possibly receive, and are capable of, so Hell is the greatest Evil, and as such is represented to us by that Revelation which assures us of it, attended with the most sad and woful Circumstances that can be imagined. I shall offer the thoughts of it to the Sinner under such Ideas and Representations as are given of it by the Holy Ghost in Scripture. And,

1. We must conceive a Horrid, Dark and Dismal Dungeon in some deep Cavern of the Earth, designed for Horrour, and fill'd with the Blackness of Darkness, and inhabited only by Cursed Fiends, and frightful Ghosts and Devils, into which the wretched Caitiff is to be thrown, *bound hand and foot, and so cast into outer Darkness, Matth. 22. 13. and delivered into chains of darkness, 2 Pet. 2. 4.* Darkness is the Natural Image and Symbol of Horrour and Disconsolateness, as Light is of Comfort and Pleasantness ; so that the Scripture

ex-

expresses Happiness by the *dwelling in light*, as it does Misery by *being cast into outer Darkness*, where there is not any beam of Light, nor any the least glimpse of Joy and Comfort. And thus to be shut up for ever in a place of Darkness and Horrour, and confined to this Dismal and Infernal Prison to all Eternity, would be a dreadful Misery were there nothing else; but they are to be Tormented there as well as Imprisoned, and that with the most exquisite Pains and Tortures, as they are described to us, in the second place.

2. By Fire and Burning, which is the most Terrible, the most Keen and Painful of Bodily Punishments, which enters the tender parts with pointed and piercing Fury, and dissolves and distorts them with its rapid Motion, and has nothing to abate its extreme Cruelty, but that it quickly consumes and dispatches, and spends it self with its own Rage and Violence, as well as destroys its Subject. But this is the dreadful Nature of that infernal Fire, that it never goes out, but is, as the Scripture calls it, *unquenchable*, and that the miserable Wretches that are condemned to it, shall endure the Pain and the Rage of it for ever, and shall never be consumed or destroyed by it, but shall be *Tormented with Fire and Brimstone in the presence of the holy Angels, and in the presence of the Lamb, and the smoke of their Torment ascendeth up for ever and ever, and they have no rest day nor night*, Rev. 14. 10, 11. Let us then set before us a Burning Lake of liquid Fire and melted Brimstone,

stone, like *Nebuchadnezzars* fiery Furnace, heat seven times Hotter than any thing we here know, and the Damned Wretches cast into it, and like *Dives*, sadly Tormented in those Flames over all their Parts, so that the Tongue is swelled with Heat as in a raging Fever ; and nothing would be so comfortable to it as a drop of Water to cool it, and to slack and abate the scorching Calenture. Some are inclined to think all this but Allegory and Metaphor, and painted Fire, but the Scripture speaks so often of it, that I cannot but think it may be literally true, and that Fire is made the Instrument of those Bodily Pains that are there to be Suffered and Inflicted after the general Judgment and Resurrection. Or however, that as great Pains of Body are thereby signified and exprest, and shall really be endured some way or other, as by burning in Fire : For if the Holy Spirit to help our weak Thoughts, and assist our Imaginations, has made use of those known things only as Emblems and Pictures of some real Pains, yet they are certainly as great or greater than any of those by which they are shadowed out and represented, as the pleasure of Heaven is much greater, no doubt, and does far exceed that of a Feast, a Wedding, a Crown, or any such Earthly resemblance. As to the proper Pain and Torment of the Mind, which is the other, and the greatest part of Hellish Misery, for the Mind has a more quick, and keen, and immediate sense than the Body, that is represented in Scripture by *the worm*
which

which never Dyes, Matth. 9. 46. i. e. by a passion that bites, and gnaws, and corrodes, and pains us within, as the Fire, or something else, torments the Body from without, and this includes in it all those dismal and reflecting Thoughts and Apprehensions which the Mind has upon its dreadful State and Condition. As,

(1.) A direful perception of the Divine Anger, Wrath and Displeasure, which when it lyes heavy upon the Mind in the highest degree, will press it into the deepest gulph of Misery, and fill it with the most terrible Ideas, and most dreadful Apprehensions. Even in this World, when a Sinner tastes but a little of the Cup of God's Fury, 'tis a *cup of trembling*, and a *cup of astonishment*, as the Scripture calls it, *Isa. 51. 17. Ezek. 23. 32.* and what will it then be when all the dregs of it must be drunk up ! When God hides his Face but a little, there is all Trouble and Horror, and what must it then be when he hides it for ever ! The sense and apprehension of lying under the displeasure of Almighty Power, and provoked Justice, and abused Goodness, and all these highly incensed against a Man, and never to be appeased, must be very dreadful, and make sad impressions upon the Mind : The Presence and the Favour of God giveth Life and Comfort ; what Death and Misery must it then be to be Banished for ever from both, with a *Depart from me ye Cursed !*

(2.) The Mind will reflect upon what is past with infinite Remorse and Anguish,
and

and with great regret, Curse its own Folly and Madneſs that has brought it to this ſad Condition, when God had put it in its Power to have made it ſelf for ever Happy, had it been wiſe and conſidering as it ought to have been. This will be the great ſting of its Miſery, that it wilfully brought it upon it ſelf, and for a few Fooliſh, and Raſh, and Sinful Actions, undid it ſelf for ever, and for ſome trifling Reaſons and pitiful Temptations, the little Pleaſures or Profits of Sin, which are now all gone, made it ſelf thus wretchedly and eternally Miſerable. How with Rage and Envy will it look up to that Happineſs it has loſt, and ſees others enjoy, and vex it ſelf with Fury that it ſhould reſuſe and reject that when it was offered to it; and this one thought will double and increaſe its Miſery, and make it Curſe and Tear it ſelf, that it was its own choice.

(3.) As the Mind with looking back will be filled with Remorſe and Anguiſh upon its paſt Sins and paſt Madneſs, ſo by looking forward, and ſeeing no end of the Miſery it is in, it will be filled and overwhelmed with Deſpair, which is a Paſſion of Mind ſo perfectly and ſo unſpeakably miſerable, that I ſhall not venture to deſcribe it, for 'tis beyond any thing we can imagine, and it properly belongs to the next head, which is the eternity and endleſs duration of theſe Torments and Miſery, which though it be but a circumſtance of time, and not properly that wherein they conſiſt, yet is the moſt dreadful Perfection

perfection and Completion of them, which I shall consider by and by.

Let us now but seriously think with ourselves what a dreadful state it is to be under all this torment of Mind, and pain of Body, to lye thus upon the Rack of the greatest Tortures both from within and without, and that in such extremity, that they shall make dreadful and hideous Signs and Expressions of it, in *Weeping, and Mourning, and Lamentation, and Gnashing of Teeth*, Matth. 22. 13. when *they shall gnaw their Tongues for Pain, and blaspheme the God of Heaven, because of their pains*, Rev. 16. 10, 11. And yet all their bitter Cryes and dolorous Exclamations, shall only blow up and kindle the Rage and Fury of the surrounding Flames, for none of their Sighs shall put out, nor their Tears extinguish any the least spark of those Flames which are kindled by the Wrath of God, who is a *consuming Fire*. Who can express or imagine the keenness and sharpness of those Pains of Body, or the Pangs and Agonies of Conscience, the Passions and Anguish, and Remorse of Mind, and nothing to take off, or divert, or give the least intermission to all these, but an angry God above, a dark and bottomless pit of burning Brimstone below, and frightful, and ugly, and insulting Spirits, like so many Executioners, all about it, and no friend to call to, to pity or to help it.

O sad, and miserable, and intolerable Condition! Who would not do all he could to warn others and himself that they come not

to that place of Torments ? What pleasure or profit can there be in the most tempting Sin, that should make a Man venture the enduring all this for the sake of it ? Who would endure this but one Day, or one Month, for all the things this World can afford ? Who would suffer it for so long a time as this life of Sin here lasts for all that he gets by it ? Who would endure it a thousand years for all the Kingdoms of this World, and the Glories thereof, much less who would for a trifling Lust, or a sinful Inclination, for a little unjust Gain, or unlawful Pleasure, endure it for ever ? Which is the next thing I am to speak to. Thar,

II. This is Eternal, and shall never have end. This is the dreadful and amazing Circumstance of this Misery, and that which must confound him that suffers it, that it shall last for ever, so that there shall never be any hopes of having an end of it, after never so many Thousand Years, but there shall be still an infinite Eternity behind, and so as much as there was at the first beginning. Who can think of this without the utmost horror, and amazement, and having his Thoughts swallowed up with the dreadful Consideration of it ? It is so great, that some have had their Reason overcome and overwhelmed by it, so that they have thought it unagreeable, and inconsistent with God's Goodness and Justice, to inflict so long and so great a Misery upon any of his Creatures, and have therefore endeavoured

limit this Eternity to a shorter compass of time, and not to extend it to an absolute but limited Eternity, as sometimes it is understood in Scripture, and therefore to reconcile those places of Scripture to this notion of it, and to interpret them so, that Eternity in the fullest and utmost sense may not be understood by them. I shall therefore briefly examine this Argument, which on the one side seems very careful of the Credit and Honour of the Divine Justice and Goodness, but on the other, takes off extremely from the utmost terror of Hellish Torments, in denying them to be Eternal, so that it may tend in great measure to take off the Power and Force of those which are the greatest restraints that God could lay upon Sin and Wickedness; and since so few are prevailed upon by them, though under the Doctrine and Persuasion of their being Eternal, how much fewer would be so if they thought them otherwise. I shall therefore,

First, Briefly show how this Eternity of Hellish Torments is agreeable to God's Goodness.

Secondly, How it is plainly and undeniably proved from Scripture and Revelation.

First, How 'tis agreeable to God's Goodness to punish the few Sins of a short Life with such great and never ending Torments, when in all Governments and all Distributions of Justice, the Punishment ought not to be

so disproportioned, and so much greater than the Crime. And besides, how a Good, and Tender, and Pitiful God, should keep a poor Creature in being for ever, meerly to let it suffer, and be miserable, and endure infinite Torments. To this I answer briefly ;

1. Whatever Punishment is necessary to secure the ends of Government, to preserve Obedience to Laws, and to keep bold and daring Men from breaking and violating them; whatever is necessary to this end is just, and necessary, and agreeable both to the Goodness, and Wisdom, and Justice of the best Government ; for otherwise, there must be no such thing as Government in the World, but God must give up his Authority, and throw the reins loose upon the necks of his Creatures, if he have not a Power to Threaten and Inflict such Punishments as shall be sufficient to deter Men from Disobedience, and to restrain them from Wickedness. Now we easily see to how little purpose a less Punishment would serve then that of Hell to those ends, since there are so few awed even by that, tho' God has so severely threatned it. If then, for the ends of Government, and for Publick Good, such a Punishment as this be necessary, it is consistent both with Justice and Goodness however severe it be, for this is the only just measure and proportion of Punishments that they be able to attain their end, and the Rule of Justice is to be taken not from any Private but Publick Reasons.

2. God

of REPENTANCE. 83

1. God has given us free choice, and promoted both Eternal Happiness, and Eternal Misery to us ; *He hath set before us Life and Death*, Deut. 30. 15. So that if we Obey him, and Live Wisely and Vertuously, we shall enjoy the one ; but if we choose Sin, we choose Death with it, and our Destruction is of our selves, and we judge our selves unworthy of everlasting life, Acts 13. 46. as Paul and Barnabas told the Jews. God's proposing such vast Rewards and Punishments, as 'tis perhaps a necessary Sanction of his Laws, so 'tis perfectly our own Fault and Madness, if we refuse the one and incur the other.

Secondly, I shall show how this Eternity is clearly and undeniably proved from Scripture, which it seems to be, because the word Eternal and Everlasting, and what amounts to that, is always used upon this account, as everlasting fire, *Matth. 25. 41.* and everlasting burnings, *Isa. 33. 14.* and the fire that is unquenchable, and that never goes out, *Mark 9. 46.* *Luke 3. 17.* But to this they say, that the word Eternal is often used in Scripture in a limited sense, according to the nature of the thing to which it belongs ; as the Jewish Priesthood is called an everlasting Priesthood, *Exod. 40. 15.* and their Law of Atonement is called an everlasting statute, *Lev. 16. 34.* Tho' neither were to be so strictly, nor to last longer than the Jewish œconomy : So Sodom and Gomorrah, and the Cities about them, are said to suffer the vengeance of eternal Fire, in *ver. 7.* of St. Jude's Epistle, because it brought eternal

Destruction to them, though there be now none of that fire remaining, so shall the fire of Hell, say they, destroy and annihilate the Wicked, and so as the Scripture speaks, bring everlasting Death and Destruction upon them, though if that shall last Eternally, yet they shall not be Eternally tormented in it.

Now in reply to this, I own, that the word *Eternal* and *for ever*, is often used in a limited sense, but that it cannot be so when it is spoken here of Hellish Torments, there is this evidence, that the same word *aiōnōs* which is spoken of Eternal Punishment, is spoken also of Eternal Life, so that if it be understood of a limited Eternity in the one, it must be so in the other, which no body ever held or supposed, and yet there is as much Reason from hence to deny the absolute Eternity of Heaven, as the absolute Eternity of Hell.

2. That they suffer Eternal Death, and are Eternally destroyed, is not to be understood in a strict and literal sense, so that they lose all Being, but yet are not Eternally tormented is plain from those places where it is said *They have no rest day nor night*, Rev. 14. 11. which supposes them not to be in a state of Non-existence, but of Actual Pain. 'Tis said, there also, that *they shall be tormented with Fire and Brimstone*, and that *the smoke of their Torment ascendeth up for ever and ever*, ver. 10, 11. which can never without Violence be understood of the Fire which still lasts, and which they suppose to be Eternal, whilst they are

not Tormented in it, but Destroyed by it, though it remains still as a Monument of God's Justice and Vengeance upon Sinners, for the *Smoke of their Torment ascending for ever*, supposes them to be for ever Tormented, and *their having no rest Night nor Day*, necessarily implies this. Besides, as it is said, *The fire is not quenched, nor never goes out*; so it is said also, that *their worm never Dyes*. Now though the Fire might possibly continue without its proper subject, yet the Worm there meant never can, for that is only that Anguish, and remorse, and vexatious reflection of Mind, which if it never Dye, the subject of it must continue, and suffer it for ever. So that though our Socinian Adversaries avoid the other places of Everlasting Punishment, and Everlasting and Unquenchable Fire, with some Art and Philosophy, yet they can never evade those of *Worms never dying, and of the smoke of their Torments going up for ever, and their having no rest Day nor Night*, Rev. 14. 11.

But not to dispute further of these matters, let the Sinner seriously consider and meditate on these infinitely great, and infinitely lasting and never ending Torments. If there be such a thing as Hell, it concerns him highly to Repent, and so take care to avoid it. If he do not think this to be true, but secretly disbelieve it, he must disbelieve all Religion, and all Revelation, and run into the utmost Madness of Scepticism and Atheism; and then let him consider, that 'tis not his Belief makes things to be true or false, but whatever he

thinks of them, they are and will be what they are in themselves ; and 'tis certain he can never know them to be false, however he is inclined to believe them so ; and therefore were they never so uncertain, and were it but merely probable, or indeed possible that there should be any such thing, yet a Man in his Wits should run the venture, and lye open to so Prodigious and Dreadful Hazard as an Eternity of Misery. But such Christians that firmly believe them, and have all Reason so to do both from Revelation and Reason too, for all Mankind had ever some Belief and Expectations of sad Punishments in another World for Wickedness, if them 'tis unaccountable Folly and Madnes to live in such Sins, and in such courses, as will throw them into this unquenchable Fire, and consign them to this dreadful and everlasting state of Misery. Is there any Sin whose Charms are so great, whose Gains are so tempting that for the enjoyment of all these for a little Season, 'tis worth enduring the Torments of Hell for ever ?

If these *Terrors of the Lord* will not persuade Men to Repent and Leave their Sins nothing will. Yet there is one or two other Motives or Arguments to Repentance for Christianity, which I must propose after this of Hell, and all the rest, namely,

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S E C T. V.

Other Gospel Motives to Repentance.

ANother Motive which may be said to be peculiar to the Gospel, and which should encourage to Repentance above all others, is the Promise of the Divine Grace and Holy Spirit to enable us to perform it, to assist us to overcome all our evil Habits, and to Master all the Corruptions and Imperfections of Human Nature, to conquer all those Sins that are thought never so difficult, or even insuperable to Flesh and Blood, and to practice all those Verrues that are most contrary to our Natural Temper or Sensual Inclinations. Be there never so many Arguments to the doing of a thing, and never so much danger in not doing it, be it never so great and important, or never so necessary, yet if after all, a Man be without power and without ability to do it, they will be all in vain, and to no more purpose, than to perswade a Blind Man to see by the conveniency of that Sense, or a Lame Man to run by the danger he may otherwise be in, or a Man tumbling from a precipice to stop before he falls to the bottom, 'tis only to mock and deride us with Motives and Arguments to a thing, if it be wholly out of our power to effect it, and therefore there is no such Motive to the doing a thing that we are otherwise perswaded is of great

Moment and Importance, as to be assured of sufficient power to enable us to go through with it, without which all our Vigour will be dampt, and all the Sinews of Industry cut, and all our Endeavours blasted, by which we should set about it, and we shall run the Censure of those foolish Undertakers our Saviour speaks of, *Luke 14.* who would make War, or build a Tower, without power to go on with it. God has therefore given us the greatest Encouragement by the Gospel, that can be set upon the practice, as of all other Duties, so especially of this hard one of Repentance, when he thereby assures us, that his *Grace shall be sufficient for us*, that *he worketh in us both to will and to do*, that *his Spirit shall be given us*, and *abide with us for ever*, and that *we shall be mightily strengthened by it in the inner Man*; so that a new, and strong, and vital Principle, shall be added to Human Nature to strengthen its Weakness, repair its Decays, recruit its Forces, support its feeble Powers, raise its sunk state, and restore it to the Vertue and Perfection it had lost by its Sins. How weak and decayed, how corrupted and degenerated Human Nature was of its self, both Scripture and our own Experience do sufficiently teach us; how strong and violent our Passions are, and how weak our Reason to Master and Govern them; how prone the Will is to consent to what is evil be it but a little grateful to Flesh and Blood, and what strong Proclivities and Inclinations are in us to many Sins. The Heathens were very sensible of this

this Corruption and Decay of Human Nature, and into what a low and degenerate state it was sunk, and therefore they complained very often of the *ὑλη* and *πλεονεξία*, of the Souls being sunk into Matter and a Terrestrial state, its wings being molted, and its Powers being drooping and sickly, and what should raise and restore it, and be a Cure to this Disease, they could not find out; they felt how strong were the propensions to Vice, and how the Mind *διὰ τὴν πολλὴν μαλυβδίσιν ὑποκρίσκειται πρὸς κακίαν*, as *Hierocles* speaks, was carried by its Passions, like so many weights hanging upon it, and inclining it to Sin, and what should ballance these, what should turn and counterpoize those Propensities and Inclinations, what should bear up against all the Corruptions from within, and the Temptations from without, and relieve and succour the weak forces of decayed Nature that was so strongly Besieged, and so little able to hold out of it self, this they could not know; for 'tis only by the Gospel and Christianity that we have the Promise of God's Grace and Holy Spirit to be given to us when we ask it, and to belong as a right to all Christians by vertue of the New Covenant, and be a standing Principle to prevent and restrain us from Sin, and work Holiness and Vertue in our Minds. And now by vertue of this we have the greatest encouragement to Repent and Leave our Sins, which is a Power to do so. We have a new Principle of Life conveyed into our Souls, and a Fresh, and Heavenly, and almost a Miraculous Power given

given to us, by which *the Lame may walk, and the Lepers be cleansed*; i. e. by which those who are Naturally Impotent may be enabled to do their Duty, and the greatest Sinners may be Cured of their foulest Sins. All the Excuses which were more reasonable and plausible heretofore of the Weakness and Impotency of our Nature, of the Strength and Power of our Corruptions, of the Necessity and Unavoidableness of our sinful Actions, are now quite taken away by this Divine Grace and Assistance of the Holy Ghost, which the Gospel promises and bestows upon us. By this the greatest Sin may be Conquered, the strongest Lust and Temptation Overcome, and the longest Habit and Custom changed and broken, so that no Sinner should be discouraged from breaking off his Sins by Repentance, by reason of the Difficulty or Impossibility of it, since no Sin is too strong for the Grace of God, but we can in every thing be *more than Conquerors through him which strengtheneth us*, and *greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the world*, than the Devil or any Sin that we shall be in danger of, which can never take such possession of any Soul, as not to be cast out by the Power and Spirit of Christ. However hard it is to overcome a long Custom, and root out an ill Disposition, and to restrain and check an unbridled Lust and Appetite that has too long had the reins thrown upon its Neck, yet a firm Resolution, strengthened with the Divine Grace and Assistance of Heaven, will be able even to *quicken and raise those who are dead in*

Trespases and Sins, to create them again in Christ Jesus unto good works, and to renew them again unto Repentance, Heb. 6. 6. That Lust which we thought was so violent that all the force of Reason could not stand against it, that Temptation which we called irresistible, that Custom and Habit which we imagined Incurable, that Vice which we counted too hard for Flesh and Blood to deny, these may all be certainly, not to say easily, overcome by the Divine Grace, if we will make use of it. Let the greatest Sinner therefore, with the power of Christ and the auxiliary forces of Heaven, set upon his strongest Sins, let him but boldly and resolutely fall upon them, and he shall find they will give ground, and in a little time their power will abate, and he will, by the help of God and his own constant endeavours, obtain a full and a perfect Victory over them. God will not indeed, without our own Endeavours and Cooperation, do the whole work for us, nor will his Spirit work upon us, as if we were Machines, and had not Internal Powers and Principles of Action within our selves, by an irresistible Force and Impulse which shall do all this in an instant, and Convert a Sinner in a moment. No, this must be done gradually and successively, by the bringing in of other Thoughts, Dispositions, Inclinations and Practices, by a kindly and gentle influence upon our Minds, the Spirit descending like Rain, or shedding its Verrue like Dew upon our Hearts, and to bringing forth the Fruits of Repentance in us, not like a violent Stream

Stream or a mighty Torrent, bearing down all immediately before it. The Spirit of God, which is compared in Scripture to the Winds blowing, where we see the effects though we discern not the cause, does not by a sudden gust, like a Hurricane, Convert a Sinner, and Turn him from his Sins, in such a manner as a Tree is torn up by the Roots with a violent Tempest, but by a fresh and gentle gale it carries the Sinner from Vice to Vertue, by filling his Mind with new thoughts, and strongly moving and determining him the right way, and secretly inclining his Mind to choose, and his Understanding to see and consider what is his true Interest and Happiness, and by an inward Energy and Vertue, as a principle of Life, acts secretly and undiscernably upon all our Faculties, changing our Thoughts, Desires and Affections, and working upon our Minds, though in a way agreeable to our Rational Faculties, yet by a Power superiour and superadded to them.

And now let every Sinner consider what great Motives and Encouragements, and so what Obligations he hath to Repent by the Gospel, how powerfully and how endearing-ly, by Motives both of Love and Fear, Christ doth there *call Sinners to Repentance*. It was his great work, and for this purpose he came into the World, to recover lost and undone Mankind, and to rescue them from that state of Sin and Misery they were in, and to restore them to a state of Vertue and Happiness. This was a design worthy Christ's coming into the

the World, and all the Myſterious Diſpenſation of Chriſtianity.

7. And this is of ſuch abſolute Neceſſity and Importance to us, that 'tis impoſſible we can otherwiſe eſcape Miſery, and not periſh inevitably. God when he would ſhow the greateſt Mercy and Kindneſs to us in the World, and demonſtrate his Love to us in the higheſt manner, as he hath done by the Goſpel, yet hath there told us, that *except we repent we ſhall all certainly periſh*, Luke 13. 3. This is the perpetual and indiſpenſable condition, upon which alone we muſt expect any benefit by Chriſt and the Goſpel, this is as low as God can go with us. Perfect and uninterrupted Obedience all our Lives is his due, and when we have broken that, and he compounds with us, and accepts of Partial and Renewed Obedience inſtead of Entire, *i. e.* of Repentance, and returning to our Duty inſtead of keeping always to it; this is the utmoſt Favour can be expected from him, or that he can grant to us, and Repentance is the only way by which it is poſſible for a Sinner to eſcape Wrath and Damnation. This I ſhall a little clear, and make out, and then perſwade to this Duty of Repentance from the abſolute neceſſity of it.

1. Then, 'tis this alone can conſiſt with the Wiſdom and Honour of God, as he is Governour of the World. God as he is a Being of Infinite Goodneſs and Compaſſion to his Creatures, ſo he is a very Wiſe and Prudent Governour of the World, and therefore though, like

a Merciful Prince, out of the Goodness of his Nature, and the tender Inclinations he has for all his Subjects, he is ready to shew all Mercy and Clemency to those that have offended him, yet if he should do this too easily, without any security of their good Behaviour for the future, or any Care and Provision for their better Obedience, it would not a little reflect upon the Wisdom of his Government, and represent him as too soft and easie a Being, and render his Authority in time, Cheap and Contemptible. It would not only loosen the Reins of Government, but be a letting them go out of his hands, and throwing them upon the Necks of his Insolent and Rebellious Vassals, if without any Tyes or Obligations for the future, or letting them know upon what Conditions they should be capable of his favour and continue in it, he should take off all the Punishment their past Crimes had deserved, this would be to encourage them to commit new ones, and give them just grounds to hope for an absolute and perpetual Impunity. Should God have granted by the Gospel, or any other way, such an Unconditional Charter of Mercy and Pardon, this would have certainly destroyed that very Power by which he granted it, and such a Privilege or Concession as it would greatly have reflected upon his Honour, so it would have quite undermined his Authority; it would have been a resigning up his Throne, and a laying his Crown at the feet of his own insolent Rebels. For what would have remain'd to him of Power to Govern

vern or to Punish, if he had done this? If he had set out a standing Act of Grace and Mercy to all Sinners, without any Condition or Proviso that they turn from their Wickedness which they had committed, that they should come in and lay down all their Hostile Weapons, and be Faithful and Loyal hereafter, or else be utterly incapable of any benefit of it: Without this it had been rather a Dispensation, or Indulgence to be Wicked, than a wise Proclamation of Mercy to serve the true Ends and Interest of Government. God indeed has with great Wisdom and Goodness found out such a temper in his Government, and contrived such an expedient, as shews the most admirable Wisdom and the most wonderful Mercy both together, and that is, for the sake and by the mediation of a Sacrifice to pardon, and yet to punish the Sinner, by the same way to give an instance of his Mercy and a remonstrance of his Justice; and the design of all that is to show, that though he is the most inclined to Mercy and Clemency, yet he will never show it but in such a way as is consistent with the Honour and Wisdom of his Government. He is willing to abate of his extream Right over his Creatures, and to take off the edge and severity of his Laws, so far as Prudence and the Wise Ends of Government will give leave, but not so far as shall give any manner of encouragement to Disobedience and Wickedness, and that would be unavoidable, if he should ever grant a Pardon to wicked Men upon any other condition than turning away from their Wickedness.

2. As

2. As 'tis this alone can consist with the Honour and Wisdom of God, as he is a Wise Governour, so nothing but this can render us acceptable to him, as he is a truly Righteous and Holy Being. If we consider God as such, as a Being essentially Holy, so that this is not only his Perfection but his very Nature, then it can never be imagined that he can have any love or kindness, or show any favour to a Wicked Man, till he has turned away from his Wickedness. What is so contrary to himself he can never love, if he love himself, for he might by the same reason as well hate himself as love that. The love of God depends not upon any particular arbitrary inclination, or unaccountable Humour and Fancy, as in weak Mortals, but it arises from his own Essential Excellencies and Perfections, and is grounded upon a true and a lasting Principle, his own Nature rather than his Will: So that whilst God himself is unchangeably Holy, he will always love any Soul that is truly Holy, and comes up to his original Holiness by such Measures and Proportions as its Nature will admit, but whilst the Mind continues Wicked, it can never by any means in the World be reconciled to God, 'tis alienated from him, 'tis opposite to his Nature, and 'tis therefore the necessary Object of his Hatred and Displeasure, or as the Scripture speaks, *An abomination to him*. Sin is the only thing that God hates, and the only cause why he is angry and displeased with any of his Creatures, and as long as this remains there is an everlasting breach, and a per-

perpetual Ground and Foundation of enmity between them, and not only Light and Darkness, but Heaven and Hell are more irreconcilable than a Righteous God and a Wicked Soul. All the Sacrifices that can be offered to atone and expiate for such an one, if it continues such, were they never so rich, or never so many, can no more commend it to God, or make its peace with him, than all the Bribes and Presents of the *Indies* could pervert a Just and Righteous Judge, or blind the Eyes of Justice and Integrity it self. There can never be any other terms of Reconciliation between a Wicked Soul and a Righteous God, but only this, that it become Righteous, and till it do so, it can never become the object of God's Love and Favour, unless he change his own Righteous Nature, and cease to be Righteous and Holy himself.

3. Without this we can never be freed from the Natural and Necessary Evils of Sin upon our Minds, whereby it will make us inwardly miserable till we are Cured of them; for though we should suppose all the Political Evils, as I may call them, of Sin taken away and removed, i. e. all that outward Mischief and Punishment which is to be inflicted upon it from the Arbitrary Will and Threatning of the Sovereign Lawgiver, though he should be out of Tenderness and Compassion, or for the sake of a Sacrifice or other Consideration, forbore of that, and not execute the utmost Penalties, and those positive Severities that he had denounced against it, yet so many are the

Natural Evils that are annex'd to it, that it would of it self make the Mind necessarily and inwardly Miserable. This does not depend upon the Will of God as a Governour only, but as a Creator, as he hath settled and ordered the nature of things, and made it impossible they should ever be otherwise. Misery is so entailed to Sin by the fundamental Constitution of things, that 'tis impossible ever to cut it off. It is as inseparable from and as closely connected to it as effects are to their causes; and we may as well divorce Light from the Sun, or Heat from Fire, or Misery from Wickedness. It springs out of it Naturally, as a foul stream from such a corrupt Fountain, grows upon it as the proper and bitter Fruit from such a Poysonous Root, and Sin as a true Parent has the seeds of all Evil in its own Bowels. A Mind that is overrun with Vice will as necessarily be corrupted and weakened, and vitiated, as the Body is decayed and impaired by a Disease. The one will as necessarily put the Mind out of order, as Sicknes does the other; and till it be cured and made sound, it will always be in pain and uneasie. Its Faculties will necessarily be weakened and impaired, and disordered by it, and so lose their true and proper Happiness; and it will be put into an unnatural frame and temper, and be like the Body when its Limbs are out of joynt, in great Torture till it be set right again. God must alter his own Nature, and the Nature of things too, or else Vice and Wickedness, whilst 'tis con-

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inued in, will make the Mind miserable, sickly and uneasie, and fill it with restlessness and inquietude, and make it a Torment and Vexation to it self.

4. Without Repentance, and being freed from our Sins, we can never be capable of partaking or enjoying any true and positive Happiness, much less that great and eternal one in Heaven. Happiness must be something within our selves, like Health, it consists in the right Crasis and Constitution of the Mind, in the strength, and vigour, and regular operation of all its Faculties. Till it be put into this state by Repentance and Vertue, 'tis incapable of enjoying any true Happiness. Our Vices must therefore be first Cured and Purged out, or else our Souls will be as incapable of enjoying their proper Spiritual and Rational Pleasures, with their Sins, and wicked Habits and Dispositions upon them, as our Bodies of enjoying their animal and sensual ones with a Lethargy or Apoplexy, or whatever destroys their proper Strength, Sense and Perception. Without Holy Minds, and Vertuous Dispositions, and Heavenly Affections and Inclinations, as we can no way hope for Heaven, so we are no way fitted or qualified for it, and therefore our Minds must necessarily be disposed and prepared for that by Repentance and previous habits of Vertue, and such a Divine Temper and Holiness of Mind, as can alone make us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the Saints in light, as St. Paul speaks, Coloss. 1. 12. without which

we should no more enjoy Heaven than a blind Man enjoys the light of the Sun, whose Organs are spoil'd and vitiated, and who wants the use of those Senses and Faculties by which he should perceive it. So that if a Sinner should be sent to Heaven with all his unrepented Sins, unmortified Lusts and vicious Inclinations, and without that love of God and Goodness which is to fit him for it, he would be not only like him which came to the Marriage-Feast without a Wedding-garment, who must be turned out of that company he was so unfit for, but like one that had the greatest Dainties set before him, but that was sick, and had no stomach, and so could not taste or relish any of them. Till the Mind is brought to love God, and delight in him, and in all the actions of Vertue and exercises of Religion, it cannot be Happy in Heaven; but that would rather be unagreeable and an aversion to it, than an Happiness. Till a Sinner therefore be brought off from his Sins by Repentance, and restored to a Vertuous, and Holy, and good Mind, he cannot enjoy Heaven or Happiness, nor be freed from Sin and Misery, nor can a Holy and Wise God be reconciled to him, or forgive him.

Upon all these accounts we see his Repentance is absolutely necessary to entitle him to Pardon and Salvation, and without this he must certainly and unavoidably perish. Now,

8. This absolute necessity of it is a strong and powerful Argument to perswade us to it. Whilst Men have any hopes of escaping with their

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their Sins, this with the Pleasures and Temptations of them will encourage them to persist in them, and to enjoy their Lusts and their Liberties which they have made very hard and uneasy to deny themselves, but when they find they must either do this, or else necessarily perish for ever; this, if any thing, will prevail upon Men who believe and consider the dreadful horror of Everlasting Damnation. Now the absolute necessity of Repentance is as plain by the Gospel, as the Power and Validity of it. We are as much assured that without it we shall be Damned, as we shall be saved with it. Now this above all commends it as a Medicine to us, that it will cure us if we use it, but that we shall Dye if we do not; however bitter and unpalatable it may be, however it may disorder us while it is working upon us, and however painful the operation may be, yet if we must lose our Lives without it, this will make us choose and endure it, and go through with it. Though we must cut off a Right-hand, yet if the Gangrene will kill us if we do not, we shall submit to it. Though it be very painful to part with our Lusts and our beloved Sins, yet since we must be Damned if we do not, this will bring us to it. If a Man must sink unless he throws away his richest Lading, and discharges himself of his weighty treasure, he will lose that rather than his Life; and if he be not Mad, he will for the same reason, cast away his Sins rather than his Soul. No Man disputes this when he is brought into such a necessity, such

a strait and exigency as to be thus tryed. Now Christ has by the Gospel put this necessity upon us; either Repent and leave your Sins, or perish with them. There is no avoiding this, no possibility to prevent it any way, and therefore when there is but one thing to be done, and such a necessity for doing it, one would think it should do it self; but this is a necessity of Reason, of Choice, of Thought, of Deliberation, that requires our Minds to think of it and consider it, or else it will not work upon us; and therefore we can throw off the force and power of it by not thinking, or not considering of it; but if we did as we ought, duly consider of it, it would have an irresistible force and power upon us, and no Man could hinder the effect of it; but he that will shut his Eyes and not see a Precipice may fall down it, and the greatest necessity of avoiding any danger is took off by not heeding, or not being sensible of it, though it be never the less great in it self for all that, and the necessity would work upon any but those who are heedless and inconsiderate.

Sad is the state and condition of those under the Gospel, who live in a state of Sin and Impenitence, or in the habit of any unrepented Sin, they are under as absolute a sentence of Condemnation, as if the great Judge had pronounced it upon them, and bid them, *Go ye Cursed*. Whilst they continue such, there is no more hopes of Mercy for them than for the Damned themselves. Their state indeed is not as unalterable as the others is, and the

is the only difference, for they are otherwise as much Children of Wrath as they : They are not bound in Chains of Darkness, nor confined to this state by an Irreversible Judgment, but they are fettered to their Sins, and to their State by their own choice, and till they break those Bonds, and get free from them, they can never come out of that sad condition ; which should make every impenitent Sinner tremble, and seriously bethink himself what a sad State and Condition he is in, what a Doom hangs over his head, and how near his steps take hold of Death, how he walks upon the brink of Hell and Damnation, and the least fatal Accident, or sudden Death, does irrecoverably throw him in without Redemption, which should make his Heart tremble, and his Blood chill, and his Hair stand an end, if he considered it as he ought. Let him therefore resolve to snatch himself out of the fire, and speedily recover himself from the jaws of Death ; Repentance alone can do this, and this he should set about immediately, and be perswaded to it by those powerful Motives and Arguments which the Gospel and Christianity proposes, and which I have from thence offered to him.

I shall subjoyn to these another Motive or Exhortation to Repentance, which I cannot call so properly Evangelical and peculiar to the Gospel, but what arises from both Nature and Reason, and some Gospel Considerations mixt together, and complicated with those, and that is the Consideration of Death, and

our being made ready and prepared for it by Repentance, and therefore that nothing else can free us from the Fears and Terrors of it.

S E C T. VI.

Exhortation to Repentance as a Preparation for Death, or in order to make us ready to Dye.

THE last Motive then I shall propose to Repentance is this, that nothing else can prepare and make us ready and fit to Dye, and therefore nothing else can rake off the Fear and Terror of Death, to which in all reason we must otherwise be exposed, and so *all our life time subject to bondage*, as the Scripture speaks. Dye we know we must in a little while, and there is none so foolishly Sceptical as to deny or disbelieve this, and to hope to escape the Grave where he has seen all his Fore-fathers laid before him, and which is the common Lot or Fate of every Mortal. There is nothing therefore more concerns us while we Live, than to be always ready and prepared to Dye; this should be our great Work and Business, if we considered the true end of Living, or understood the mighty consequence of Dying, as Religion represents them both to us; and he that is not so foolish as to think he shall never Dye, should above all things take care so to Live that he may be always ready to Dye; and of the two, 'tis a greater Folly

Folly to think we shall Dye, and not prepare for it, than to think we shall not Dye at all. This it is then which a Wise Man is concerned to do all his Life, to be ready and prepared for Death, which he knows will certainly come, and because it is uncertain when it will come, therefore to be always ready, and always provided for it. There is so much Danger and Hazard not to do this, and the folly of it is so visible, and so amazing, that no Man of common Prudence, no Man in his wits, one would think, should neglect to do it: 'Tis so important, so weighty, so absolutely necessary a Duty, that our Saviour most earnestly presses it in several Discourses, and proposes it in two or three Parables, that it may make a more strong and lively impression upon our Minds. In the Parable of the wise and foolish Virgins, *Mat. 25.* at the beginning, where the coming of the Son of Man is compared to the unexpected coming of the Bridegroom at midnight, *ver 6.* in others to a Masters surprizing his Servants unaware at the second or third watch, *Luke 12. 38. Matth. 24.* at the latter end, and in both the Evangelists, to a Thief stealing upon a Man at an unknown and uncertain hour of the Night: The design of all which, is to press this great Duty upon us of being always watchful, and always doing our Duty, and always prepared for our Lord's coming: This is the Inference which Christ draws from all those Parables and Discourses; *Be ye therefore ready, for the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not, Luke*

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12. 40. Christ often calls himself the Son of Man, and as such he is to be our Judge, and as a Judge he is said to come when ever he passes Judgment upon us, and therefore St. James represents the nearness of his Judgment by that Phrase, *Behold the Judge standeth before the Door*, James 5. 9. and his executing Judgment and Destruction upon *Jerusalem* was called *his coming*, Matth. 24. 3. And as his final publick Judgment of all the World at the last day is called *his coming*, 1 Cor. 15. 23. and several times in that Chapter of St. Matthew, so his private Judging of us at our Death is his coming also meant by these several Parables, and for that coming of his we ought to be always ready; *i. e.* always prepared for Dying. Here I shall show,

I. That this Readiness or Preparation consists only in Repentance, and a Holy Life as the fruit and perfection of it.

II. The great Obligations we have to be always thus ready and prepared for Death.

I. This Readiness or Preparation for Death, consists only in Repentance, and a good Life as the fruit of it: For nothing else can fit us to Dye, but to Repent and Live well, neither can there be any other readiness and preparation for Death but only that. For we must not imagine that we can be ready on a sudden; and that though we were utterly unprepared before, that at a few Days or Hours warning we can make our selves ready and fit to Dye:

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No, our whole Life, at least a considerable part of it, is to be spent in making our selves ready ; for we must not think that our Souls can, like our Bodies, be drest in a few moments, or that we can be fit to meet the Bridegroom when he calls us in haste, and on a sudden. Vertuous Habits are not put on in a moment, nor can Vicious ones be so easily and quickly cast off as our cloaths are ; no, rather like Diseases that are Chronical, and have by long time been growing upon us, they require long time, and great care, and much pains, and many remedies, and a timely course before they can be cured and got off, and before we can be well, and so ready to meet the Lord. 'Tis not a few penitential Tears upon a Death-Bed will wash away the filth of a Wicked Life, or cleanse a guilty and polluted Soul that has been many Years contracting an habitual Uncleanneſs, whose Sins stick to it like an old Leprosie, and have ear like Rust or a Canker into the very heart and substance of it, and yet they must be all got out by Repentance, and the Soul must be made sound and clear, and recover it self into a Vertuous and Good Habit before it can be ready for another World, and duly prepared for a Future State. Indeed there is a great difference to be made according to the past course of Mens Lives ; there may be a great many such Happy Souls, who by a very careful Education, and the good Example of their Parents and others, and by a Vertuous Disposition and Inclination in themselves, and above all,

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all, by the Grace and Providence of God, have been always kept from great and mortal Sins, and so never fell into a Bad and Damnable State all their Lives, but were always Verruous and Innocent as to any such Offences as should forfeit and endanger their Salvation by the Terms of the Gospel, and the Covenant of Grace ; without that we were all in a Damnable state, and the *Scripture hath concluded all under Sin* without that, *Gal. 3. 22.* For *we have all sinned, and come short of the glory of God,* and of that strict and exact Obedience which we owe to the Law of God, so that if he should enter into Judgment with us, and be Severe and Rigorous in demanding his utmost right over us, we could not contend with him, nor answer him one of a thousand, as *Job* says, *Job 9. 3.* and no Man can upon these terms be just with God, as he there says ; for so in his sight shall no man living be justified, *Psal. 143. 2.* but by the Grace and Mercy of the Gospel, according to which God will now deal with Mankind, many, I doubt not, have been so justified, that through their whole Lives they never were in a state of Damnation, for nothing puts us into that under Christianity, but a great, and known, and wilful Sin, or rather a Course and Habit of such Sins ; and though no Man liveth without Sin, that is, without some Frailties and Imperfections, and lesser Sins, which come not up to the Perfection of the Divine Law, for which he ought to beg Pardon, and say, *God forgive us our Trespases,* yet God forbid that those should

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put us into an ill State, for then no Man in the World would be ever out of it: But oh thrice happy are those Souls who have not defiled themselves with any great and damnable Sins, who have always kept to their first Love, and preserved their first Vertue unstained and unspotted, and have been so trained up in the ways of Religion and Goodness, that they never wandered or went astray from them, nor never stepped into the paths of wilful Sin, so that their steps should at any time take hold of Death; who never past out of that line which divides the two states of Grace and Damnation, nor ever approached so near to the brink of Hell as to be in danger of falling into it. These have reason to give Thanks to God all their Lives, who has thus kept them out of the Snare of the Devil, and secured them from the Jaws of Death and Destruction; and whilst they persevere and go on in this good State and Condition, *and pass from strength to strength, and from one degree of Grace to another, and grow up in all manner of Grace and Goodness, tho' they have not already attained, neither are already perfect,* as the Apostle speaks of himself, *Phil. 3. 12.* yet they are always safe, and always ready for the coming of the Son of Man, and their whole Life is a most sure, a most comfortable Preparation for Death.

But these are very few I doubt, not only to the general number of Mankind, but even to good Men; for most of the good Men we read of in Scripture, were some time or other,
guilty

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guilty of great and wilful Faults, as *Noah*, and *Abraham*, and *David*, and *St. Peter*, and *St. Paul*, and *Mary Magdalene*, and whilst they were so, and before they had recovered themselves by Repentance, I cannot but think them in a bad state ; for Mens States are not fixt and certain in this Life, but are alterable and changed according to their outward actions, and the inward temper of their Minds, and when ever a wilful and a known Sin breaks the course of Vertue, and destroys the habit of Goodness in their Souls, it breaks their good State, and destroys their comfortable Condition ; As when a Disease strikes the Vitals of our Body, and overcomes the Strength and Health of our Constitution, unless we get it off, it will certainly bring Death along with it. God indeed has prescribed us a certain Remedy, and an infallible Cure for all Morral Sins, and the greatest Spiritual Maladies and Diseases that would otherwise destroy us, and bring Death upon us, and that is Repentance, which for the sake of Christ and his Merits, and by the Mercy and Promise of God shall recover us out of that Miserable and Mortal State into which every wilful Sin had cast us. This shall set us right again in the Court of Heaven, where we were Cast and Condemned before, and this shall bring us to a state of Life and Grace, who were before struck with the sentence of Death. And Blessed be God who has thus Graciously provided for Poor, and otherwise lost Sinners by Jesus Christ ! But Repentance, alas, though

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It be a sure Remedy, yet is not so easie a one as we imagine, 'tis a very bitter dose that must not only go down very unpleasantly, but must work strongly and powerfully upon our Minds, it must not only make us Sick, and Sorrowful, Contrite and Troubled at the very Heart for every Transgression, but it must purge out of our Souls every Sin, and carry off every vile Lust and wicked Inclination. It must not only work upon the peccant Humours, and so put the Soul into great Trouble and Disorder, but it must perfectly heal and cure it; and to do that, it must take away the root of the Disease, it must search to the bottom of the Heart, it must touch us to the quick in the tenderest part of us, in the most darling Sin, and most beloved Lust, and it must cut and launce so deep, that no secret Corruption remain within, and no *fomes Morbi* be left behind. In a word, it must perfectly Cure the Soul, and whatever Disease it laboured under, it must quite remove it, so that it never return again upon it; for 'tis but a palliating, a counterfeit or an imperfect Cure till this be done: And till the Mind be perfectly restored, and amended, and made better, it has not truly Repented; and therefore the Scripture requires in Repentance, not only a *broken Heart*, which is the most significant Phrase in the World for the deepest trouble of Mind for our past Sins, but it requires a *new Heart*, and a *new Soul*, and a *new Creature*, and a *new Man*, to make up true Repentance; and not only that we be renewed
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in the Spirit of our Minds, but that we bring forth fruits worthy of Repentance, and that we turn from every Evil way, and leave and forsake every Sin that we have ever been guilty of, as I have more largely shown before. We must do all this before we can be said truly to Repent, and before we can have any good grounds to expect Pardon of any wilful Sin we ever committed in our whole Lives, we must thus Repent of it : And though we are as sure of Forgiveness if we do so, as if we had never committed it, which is the greatest Favour in the World, yet how will a poor Penitent be always afraid that he has not been sufficiently sorrowful, and fully Repented of his Sins ; how will his former Guilt fright him, when it stares him in the Face ; and how will the sad load of all his Sins lye heavy upon his Conscience when he is brought to a due sense of them ; and how must he be contented to lose a great deal of that Comfort in his Mind here, though he may be safe hereafter ; and though his Repentance may put him into a good Condition, yet it will make his Heart Sorrowful, and the remembrance of his Sins will make it often Bleed afresh within him. And when he looks back upon his past danger he must tremble at it, though he has reason to hope he has escaped it, and it must keep him always Humble, and not over-confident of himself ; and though he has his Pardon in his hand, yet he must still look upon it with Tears in his Eyes. Nothing can truly satisfy a Man that he has Repented of his Sins,

ins, but that he has left them out of Religious Grounds and Principles, and has had so much tryal of himself, as to know he would not commit them, though he were in the same Circumstances and Temptations that he was in before. And thus when a bad Man is become a good one, when he that was Careless and Irreligious is become Pious and Devout, when he that was Vicious and Debauch'd is become Sober and Vertuous, when he that was Unjust becomes Just and Righteous, and besides Restitution for all past Injustice, would not commit one act of it to gain all the World; when he that stole steals no more, and he that was given to Drunkenness or Uncleanliness, or any other Sin, wholly leaves and forsakes it, and is brought by Religion to be quite another Man than he was before, then, and not till then, is his Repentance such as may make him hope for Pardon when he Lives, and prepare him to Dye with Comfort. For to proceed a little further in this great Concern, to make a Soul fit and ready for its immediate entering upon another state, it must have these two Qualifications at that time:

1. It must be thoroughly purged from every Vicious Habit, or else it is neither *meet to be partaker of the inheritance of the Saints in light*; nor capable of the Pure, and Spiritual, and Heavenly Happiness. *As the Tree falls, so it lies*, says the Wise Man, *Ecclesiastes 11. 3.* And the same Habit and Temper, as to the main, which the Soul carries out of this World;

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World, will abide with it in the other. If any one habitual Wickedness remain upon it, or the love of any one Sin be so rooted in it, that if it lived here, it would not be brought off from it, that will ruin it, and make it miserable for ever; for if we love any one Sin more than Heaven, we must be contented to lose and part with Heaven for it; and if any Lust or Vicious Inclination be so dear to us, that we are not willing to give it up for the sake of Happiness, we give up our Happiness for the sake of that, for they two are so inconsistent, that we cannot keep both. Let not therefore any Sin remain unmortified in thy Soul, if thou would'st put thy self into such a readiness and disposition, as shall fit thee to enter upon a Happy Future State. And,

2. Let all Vertuous Habits, and Religious Dispositions of Mind be then excited, and exercised, and increased to the highest Perfection. 'Tis these will fit our Souls for Heaven, and be the true Wedding Garment for the Marriage-Feast, and 'tis these are meant by that expression in the Parable, of having our Lamps burning, in order to our waiting for the coming of the Bridegroom. Let our Devotion therefore be then kindled into the highest Flame and Ardour, and our Souls expire and ascend up in it to the Regions above. Let us raise our Minds to the highest love of God, and of our Blessed Saviour, and let our Souls be ravished with the thoughts of their wonderful Love and Kindness to us. Let us look up to Heaven, and to those joys which God has there

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ere prepared for us, and let us desire, as
on as God pleases, to be Translated to them:
et us look down upon this World with mean
and despicable thoughts, and let us consider
hat a poor, and a miserable place it is, and
e very willing to part with it; and let us
xercise all Faith, and Hope, and Trust, and
onfidence, in our Faithful Creator and Mer-
iful Redeemer, and be willing to throw our
elves wholly and chearfully upon them, and
o trust them with our Souls when they are
ping into an unknown place, and to the in-
isible *Hades*. When we believe our Lord is
ear, and coming in a few minures, thus should
e wait for him, with our *Loins girded up*,
nd our *Lamps burning*, as our Saviour's Ex-
ression is, and our Minds put into such a Re-
igious Frame and Disposition, that we may
e as like Heaven as we can, and our Souls
may be ready to go in with the Bridegroom;
nd to be admitted to the Marriage-feast of
he Lamb for evermore. We must not think
hat these Habits and Religious Dispositions
of Mind are to be got on a sudden, but we
must bring our Minds to them by previous
Acts, and long Preparations, and frequent
Exercises before-hand, and habituate our selves
to these Divine and Religious Duties and Ex-
ercises, or else we shall find, like the foolish
Virgins, that we want Oyl, and have nothing
in our Souls that should feed, and nourish, and
kindle, and maintain these Heavenly Habits
and Dispositions, which are the immediate
readiness of our Minds. But to give the plainest

Advice I can, in so important a matter, I shall propose two easie Directions, which I would have every one observe that would make himself the most ready for Death, and the coming of the Son of Man.

The first is, To be doing all the good we can to promote the Honour of God, and the Welfare of Men; to be as the Parable represents it, *Mat. 24.* at the latter end, doing earnestly the business of our Lord, and taking all the care we can of his Family, and giving *them their meat in due season*, and discharging all that trust faithfully and diligently which our Lord hath committed to us, and *not smiting our fellow Servants*, or doing any the least Injury to others, *or eating and drinking with the Drunken*, and living Carelessly and Idly, as the evil Servant is said to do, *Who put away the thoughts of his Lords coming*, ver. 48. Those who do that are apt to be Negligent and Wicked, but he that is always watchful, and always waiting for the Lord's coming, as the Parable describes the good Servant, will be faithful and diligent in performing every Duty, and every Office that his Lord requires of him, and will be contriving and designing to do all the good he can to please his Lord, and purchase his Favour; for he knows that an Idle Servant shall be punished as well as a Wicked one, and that the omission of a necessary Duty, commanded us by our Lord, will be as much charged upon us as the Commission of any thing that he has forbidden us: He will therefore be careful and diligent to

to all his Masters Commands, to fulfil all his Will, to help and relieve his fellow-Servants, and do all the good he can in his Masters Family, encourage others to do their Duty, exhort, advise, reprove and admonish them, and prepare them, as well as himself, for his Lord's coming, *Blessed is that Servant, who when his Lord cometh he shall find thus doing*, and thus employed. But,

2. He that will be thus ready must never allow himself in any Sin, or in the doing of any thing that he knows is unlawful, and forbidden by his Lord; for if his Lord cometh and findeth him in that, *He shall cut him asunder*, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites, *where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth*, Mat. 24. 51. There is no hopes for him if he be thus surprized in his Wickedness, and Death overtake him in the midst of his Sin, like the Revenger of Blood, before he can get into any City of Refuge. He that ventures upon a wilful Sin, ventures upon the very brinks of Hell and Damnation, and if a sudden Death turn him over, he falls in irrecoverably; and at best, he that suffers himself to live in a bad state, i. e. in a course of Sin, hangs over the bottomless Pit by no other hold but the weak and brittle thread of Life, and if that break, or be cut asunder, he drops into that dreadful place of Horrors. No Man therefore who is master of his Wits, and knows he is not master of his Life, should dare to live one moment in so much Peril, exposed to such Danger and Hazard, and venture his Soul and his last

stake upon so ticklish a cast as this uncertain Life is: But he should instantly, whilst he has this thought offer'd to his Mind, catch himself out of the Fire, out of the Eternal Flames of Hell, into which, so far as he knows, he may be just a falling; for they surround him, and are ready to lay hold upon him as long as he continues in his Sins, and the Gulph is open and ready to suck him in, and swallow him up, till he plunges out, and rescues himself by a speedy Repentance. Let no Man then make one Hours, one Minutes delay, who knows not how few Hours or Minutes he may have.

II. For in the next place to give some Reasons why we should be thus ready: *Who knows at what hour the Son of Man cometh?* Who that is unprepared knows what time he shall have to prepare himself? Who can tell whether the next moment shall be his own, and how little time he may have for so great a work? And who would loyter any part of his time, who knows how much that work will take up; for 'tis not a few spare Hours, or dying Minutes, will put the Soul into a readiness, will change its temper, and purge out its Sins, and dispose and fit it for another World? And who can set back Death but a few Hours when it gives a short warning, and is ready to strike us; or perhaps without any warning seizes and hurries us to the other World. It is every day making up to us, and approaches nearer us every hour, and with quick and undiscerned steps

steps it dogs and follows us, and may overtake us before we are aware of it. A sudden Feaver may set the strongest Body on fire, and presently flare out the Lamp of Life. A Convulsion may seize in a moment the main fort of Life, and surprize us in our greatest strength. An Apoplexy or a *Deliquium* may stop the nimble wheels of Life that moved vigorously and strongly just before, and make all the Vital Faculties stand still immediately. Besides a thousand accidents from without, make us in the midst of Life to be in Death, so that we can never be secure, but we may be a Dying, and every time we expire, it may be, so far as we know, our last Breath. Who would not be then ready who may thus be called on a sudden, who may have *the Son of Man come in an hour when he thinketh not*. Come he certainly will, but we cannot tell whether in *the third or fourth watch of the night*; let us then watch the whole night, that is, be ready always. If we knew the time of his coming we might be careless, and sleep, and drowse perhaps till he was near us, but since we are always to expect him at an uncertain Hour, let us put our selves into a posture and readiness to receive him at his own time. We can never be ready too soon though he come late, but if we are too late before we are ready, we lose an opportunity we can never regain, and we slip that time which we shall bewail to all Eternity. Let us think,

2. Upon the certainty of his Coming. If there were any hopes that he would never come,

come, if there were any probability that we should never Dye, if any Man could be so foolish as to perswade himself to doubt of that, he might have some reason to neglect the other, but no Man can be Sceptical as to that point, nor be so vain as to dispute himself out of the belief of it, but he knows and is convinced of that fatal Truth, that he must once Dye, and be laid in the same place of Darknels where he has seen so many others laid before him; why should he not then prepare and provide for that which will certainly happen? It can never be in vain or to no purpose to do this; it can be no lost labour, no unnecessary work, but all must confess it ought to be done one time or other. Why do we not then do that which we own to be necessary? Why that it is indeed, says the foolish Sinner, but it may be done hereafter, and at a more convenient season! Would you not think a Man Mad that should talk thus when he was in danger of Drowning, and would not take hold of the Rope was thrown out to him till his last and third rising, but let go what he had in his hand in hope to catch it again afterwards? or he that was like to fall down a precipice, and would not save himself when he might, but trust to a twig that was near the bottom? He deserves to perish that will not be willing to be saved till he is just perishing. And he that allows himself to live in a sinful state at present, with hopes to get out of it hereafter, is but like him that stabs himself with a design of being Cured, or

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swallows down a deadly Poyson upon presumption of taking an Antidote after he has done it ; the one is certainly strong enough to kill him, and the other may not be strong enough to save him, or he may be dead before he can take it. Mens Resolutions to Repent hereafter are always insincere, for if they were not they would Repent at present : And besides what a sad state are they in till they do this ; they are like Prisoners lying under a sentence of Death and Condemnation, who hope to procure a Pardon, but will not endeavour to do it till they are called to Execution, and it be too late. Their unrepented Sins do put them into as Damnable a state as if Heaven had past sentence upon them, and though they know this yet they are willing to continue so till their state is desperate, and they are never like to be otherwise. For he has no reason to think he shall be ever ready, who is not willing to make himself ready at present. Let us not therefore delay one minute this great work of Repentance, but let us set about it immediately, and resolve to go through with it, and to live in such a constant habit and practice of Repentance, and a good Life, as shall make us duly ready and prepared to Dye. For,

3. Let's consider how terrible Death must be to a wicked impenitent Sinner, and what concern he will be in at the approach of it, when he must leave all the pleasures of his Sins, and the remembrance of them fills him only with Terror and Astonishment, when
all

all their false Charms and Meretricious looks, whereby they before pleased and enchanted him, go off, and they now look gashly and frightful, and stare him in the face with a scaring appearance, and with the sad apprehensions of what they are like to end in; when a dreadful Eternity presents it self before him, and is like to swallow him up in an horrid Abyss of Misery, when he comes so nigh to the other World that he can look as it were over to it, and see the sad reception he is like to have there, when he sees Hell open before him, the bottomless Pit gaping to receive him, and some of the Flames of it flashing as it were out upon him; when Death like an Executioner comes to seize and apprehend him, and hurry him before the dreadful Tribunal, where all his past Actions must be examined, all his secret Sins laid open, and a dreadful Sentence shall be immediately pronounced upon him. The thoughts of this is enough to make a good Man afraid, and the best of us must tremble when we come before this Judgment-Seat, and are to have our everlasting Fates decreed and determined, but the Wicked must be filled with Terror and Amazement, who can have no hopes, no refuge to fly to, who has no plea for any Mercy or Pardon, nor no excuse to make for himself, who has neglected and despised all the means of Grace that were offered to him, and who would not be perswaded to any true Repentance before it was too late, and therefore he must now Repent in vain for ever. Who can express the bitter Thoughts, the

the Fears, the Horrors, the Agonies of such a Soul at that time? and who would ever feel them, who has now Power and Opportunity to avoid them? Death carries something of Terror in it to all Men, as it is a punishment of Sin, and a dark passage to the unknown Regions that are below, and it may be either great Presumption or great Stupidity to have no Fear of it. A Good Man may not overcome all the Natural Fear of Death, but the Wicked has all reason to be Scared and Terrified with it, when it comes near him, or he thinks of it.

I shall therefore in the last place consider the Terror of Death, and how we are only freed from this by Repentance and Religion, by the Hopes and Assurances of Christianity, and our having sincerely Repented of all our Sins, and so as I have shown, fitted and prepared our selves thereby for Death.

SECT. VII.

Of the Fear of Death, and how we are delivered from it by Repentance and Religion.

THERE is no Natural Evil so great as Death, the King of Terrors, and the chief of those dreadful things that Human Nature is afraid of. *Skin for Skin, and all that a Man hath will he give for his Life, Job 2. 4.* He is willing to part with every thing that he may compound with it; nay, what will he not give to

to purchase a short Reprieve from Death and the Grave? that he may but set them back a while, and gain a little more time to live. How is the poor Man willing to endure any thing, to linger out a miserable Life a little longer, though in the midst of Pains, and Aches, and greater Torments of Body perhaps then he would feel in Death it self. How patiently will he submit to the most tedious Penance, and severest Discipline that his Physician shall lay upon him, and swallow down the most loathsome and bitter Draughts, that the more bitter Cup of Death may pass from him. How will he endure the utmost Cruelties of Surgery, and bear a living Martyrdom rather than Dye, have his Body Burnt and Scarified, his Flesh Cut and Mangled to the Bone, his Limbs cut off or sawn asunder, that so he may Dye by Piece-Meals, and out-live some part of himself, and escape out of the hands of Death, though it be never so narrowly, and run away from it though he leave a Leg or an Arm behind him. This shows how Natural the love of Life is, and how willing most Men are to preserve and purchase it at any rate, and with what abhorrence they look at Death, and how it frights and startles them when it comes near them; when they behold its pale look, and its terrible Visage, and see the ghastly Monster laying hands on them, and ready to lay them prostrate at its feet, how does it then appalle and terrifie them, and make their Blood chill, and their Spirits cold and clammy, and their Hearts dye within them, when they think how
their

their once brisk and sprightly Bodies, that have been long enjoying all the sweet Pleasures of Life and Sense, shall in a moments time be deprived of all those, and become only a heavy clod, and a cold and senseless lump of Flesh, laid out upon its once warm Bed, and then lock'd up in its little Cabin, and so laid in the proper place of Rottenness and Putrefaction, where it is to molder into Dust, and to be as clean forgotten in a little time as if it had never been. This is a very Mortifying, and a very Melancholly Consideration to most Men, and when they consider that in a little time this must certainly be their own Case, and their own fatal Condition, this must keep them in perpetual Fear and Bondage; if there were no Provision against this Natural Fear of Death, if Religion did not afford us some helps and assistances against it, and there were not something to take off, and abate its Natural Terror, and to support, and strengthen, and encourage the Mind of a good Man against it. Death as it is the Punishment of Sin, and was for that end ordained by God, and brought into the World, *for by Sin entered Death*, as the Apostle says, *Rom. 1. 12.* carries some Marks of his Anger, and so must necessarily have some degree of Fear accompany it; but Christ who was to deliver Mankind from the greatest Punishments which our first Parents drew upon themselves and their Posterity by their Transgressions, and was to free us from the saddest effects of theirs and our own Sins, he has, tho' not quite, taken away this Punishment, no
more

more than he has the other temporal ones occasioned by the Fall, for we must still dye, and still have some fear of Death, yet the worst effects of Death, and for which it was most to be dreaded, those Christ has delivered us from; and it was one great reason why he became a Man, and why he took part of the same flesh and blood of which we are partakers, and which makes us subject to Death, That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their life time subject to Bondage, as the Divine Author of the Epistle to the *Hebrews* assures us, *Heb. 2. 15*. Now the ways by which Christ and Christianity do this, are chiefly these two;

I. By assuring us of another Life.

II. By taking away the sting of Death which is Sin upon our true Repentance. I shall,

1. Show this. Then,

2. Enquire whether a true Penitent and good Man ought to have no Fear of Death.

3. Give some Directions about thus overcoming the Fear of Death, that so we may not be too much terrified with it when it approaches.

I. Christ and Christianity free us from the Fears of Death, by assuring us of another Life, and of a Glorious Immortality after Death. Death would be very terrible indeed, if it took away our Being, and made an end of us when

it came and put us into a state of Annihilation.
 If the Grave were to swallow us up, and we
 were to pass into the dark Abyss of Non-Entity
 when we went out of the World. If when we
 expired our last Breath, our Souls were to
 pass with it into the soft Air, and we were to
 be no more after we went off the stage of this
 World. Nothing can be so close, so desirable
 as our Being, which is the foundation of all
 Happiness and Enjoyment to us, which some
 have thought so considerable that they have
 supposed it more eligible to be Miserable than
 not to be at all, though I can by no means be
 of their Mind, and think being only in order
 to be Miserable, to be no desirable thing, if
 the Misery be greater than the Comfort of
 Being, and bare Existence is a very thin evan-
 id, abstracted thing to be compared with
 solid and substantial Misery, but the closest
 Principles of Self-Love and Self-Preservation,
 must make us very unwilling to part with our
 Beings, and all the Pleasures and Enjoyments
 that belong to them; and therefore if we were
 to resign up those by Death, it would be very
 terrible: And how could we be sure we did
 not, if we had not firm and certain grounds of
 another Life after this, or if we had nothing
 but the uncertain Guesses and Conjectures of
 it from Natural Light. Most Men indeed had
 some dark Intimations of this from thence,
 and did either hope or fear there might be
 such a thing rather than believe it. But now
 Christ hath brought *Life and Immortality to*
light through the Gospel, 2 Tim. 1. 10. He hath
 utterly

utterly dispelled that cloud which kept those of this World from seeing into another, and hath clearly and manifestly revealed to us the certainty of another and an Immortal State, and by his Resurrection from the Dead and Ascension into Heaven, given visible and ocular Demonstration of it. And how should this take off the Fear of Death, when we are sure of another Life after it, when 'tis only a passage to another and a better World too; if it be not through our own fault; if we are not unprepared and unfitted for it? If we are, then indeed this is no great Comfort to us; but we might wish that Death would put an end to our Being; but if we have Repented us of all our Sins, and are truly prepared for Death, this should much lessen and abate the Fear of it; when though we may be a little unwilling to leave our old State and Circumstances, our old Dwelling and Habitation, our old Friends and Acquaintance, and to go into a new and unknown place, yet we are sure in the general, that we shall be much better provided for, and in a much better condition than we are here; and though the passage seems to us rough and dangerous, and we are loth to leave the shore, and to launch into the mighty deep of Eternity, yet this is a sort of Childish fondness in us to what we have been used to, and like the humour of him that would not leave his poor and pitiful Cottage that he has always lived in, though he were to go and take possession of a Kingdom in another Country. Do not Mankind that have more Wisdom and a larger

arger Spirit, willingly leave their own Native Country, and Kinsfolks, and Relations, and transport themselves to an unknown place, where there is any fair hopes and probability of mending their Fortunes, and living in a more happy and Comfortable Condition ? And have we not as good Evidence, and as much reason to believe that Heaven is as Rich and happy a Country as the *Indies*, or any other place where we have never been, and had only relations of them from others ? Has not Christ given us as much assurance of this as we can desire ? And has not the Scripture described and drawn the Chart and Map of those Heavenly Regions, and given us as true and full an account of the Pleasures and Riches of them, as we can wish for or expect in this Mortal State ? If we knew them so fully and particularly as we shall do hereafter, we should not so much love Life as we now fear Death ; but God has concealed the particular knowledge of them from us at present that we may be willing to live here, but the general knowledge of a Future and Glorious Immortality which we have by Jesus Christ, whereby we are assured that Death does not conclude our Being, but only translate us to a much better State, if we be fit for it by Repentance, *this* should deliver us from the Fear of Death.

II. Christ has taken away *the sting of death*, as the Apostle intimates, 1 Cor. 15. 56. and so has delivered us from the servile Fear of it, *for the sting of death*, as he there says, *is Sin.*
K 'Tis

'Tis that which makes the darts of Death so Sharp and Poysonous, because they are envenomed with our own Sin, and dipt in our own Guilt. Were that but once drawn out, we might play with the harmless Serpent, and it would not bite or wound us. Could we disarm Death of those Terrors with which our own Sins dress it up, it would not appear so ugly and so frightful to us. 'Tis they which put us in a state of Bondage and Servility, and depress and sink our Minds with a slavish Fear that we are going to Execution when we are going to Dye, and that we are committed to the Grave but as to a Prison where Death like a terrible Liſtor or Executioner is to Torment us, or we are to be delivered over to him that has the Power of Death, that is the Devil. Now this may juſtly terrifie us, when we think that whenever Death arreſts us, it hurries us only to a place of Torments, and ſeizes us as Condemned Priſoners to be carried where we muſt ſuffer. 'Tis not leaving the Pleaſures of this Life makes Men ſo unwilling to Dye, as the fear of going to the Miſeries of another. 'Tis not a preſent Temporal Death they are ſo afraid of, as that Future and Eternal one which comes after it. And this indeed is juſtly to be feared, were Hell to ſwallow us up as well as the Grave, and were we to ſink into the bottomleſs Gulph when our feet take hold of Death; but Chriſt has delivered us from all the danger of this, if we do not wilfully throw our ſelves into it. He has taken away all that Guilt, and all that Punish-

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ment due to our Sins which we are afraid of, if we have but sincerely and timely Repented of them; and though Death Summons us to Judgment, and we know our selves Criminals, yet by the performance of that, we have our Pardon Signed in the Blood of Christ, and Heaven will certainly allow of it to a Christian if he have not forfeited it by a desperate Impenitence. True, and sincere, and perfect Repentance will free us in great measure from the Fears and Horrors of Death when it comes near us. Our Sins indeed will then be most apt to scare us, when Death sets them in order before us, but we have all the assurance of the Gospel, all the assurance of Heaven, that if we have duly Repented of them, they shall no way hurt or endanger us; I will not say that they shall no way make us afraid, for this perhaps would not become a very Modest, and Humble, and Penitent Sinner to be quite fearless, but he will have great Hopes with his Fears, and very chearful and comfortable grounds that shall greatly lessen and abate them; *The Righteous hath hope in his death*, Prov. 13. 32. Hopes that his Sins are pardoned in and through Christ, and that whenever he goes hence, he goes to a Glorious and Blessed Immortality, and this will take away if not all Fear of Death, yet such a troublesome and tormenting one, as fills us with Perplexity and Confusion whenever we think of it, and makes us all *our life time subject to Bondage*, as Scripture speaks. And this will help to resolve that Question I proposed in the second place, namely,

2. Whether a true Penitent, or good Christian,

stian, ought to have no Fear of Death? I Answer, He ought to have no such Fear as *makes him all his life time subject to Bondage*; such a Base, Slavish, Immoderate Fear, as makes him not enjoy himself, but sinks down his Spirit, and depresses his Mind to that degree, that he is always uneasie, and perplexed, and disturbed at the thoughts of it. Such as has been storied of some, that they would not have the word Death named in their hearing, for the very naming and thinking of it, made such an Impression upon them, and struck them with such a Panick Fear, that like the Hand-writing upon the Wall to *Belsazzar*, *Dan. 5. 6.* in the midst of their jollity, it would make *their countenance change, and their thoughts trouble them, so that the joynts of their loins were loosed, and their knees smote one against another*: But above all, such a Fear of Death as makes a Man think it a greater Evil than Sin, and so to avoid that, will deny his Saviour and renounce his Religion, or do any thing whatever is necessary to escape a present Fear of Death. This makes him a Slave to every one that has power to kill him, and to save his Life he will deliver up his Conscience, his Soul, his Saviour, his Religion, and all those things which ought to be a thousand times more dear to us, and which we should be much more unwilling to part with than our Lives. These are unreasonable and unlawful Fears of Death, but there is still a Natural Fear of Death which may belong to a penitent good Christian, and which it is not necessary he should wholly overcome, as it is a Natural Evil, as it is a Punishment

ment of Sin, as it is a going to our last Great and Terrible Tryal before the Bar of Heaven; a Tryal upon which our Souls and their Eternal Fate of Happiness or Damnation does depend. This may cause some Fear in a true Penitent, or a very good Christian, and I do not know that God has any where forbid it, or that he has promised such a full assurance to every true Penitent and good Man, as wholly to take away all kind of Fear of Death, or that this is any want of saving Faith in him. In some extraordinary Cases God may give it, as in Cases of Suffering and Persecution, when an extraordinary assistance of God's Spirit, and an extraordinary assurance of their Salvation, took away all Fears of Death, and made them go to the Flames and to the Gibbet rejoicing and triumphing, but that this is ordinary and constant, I see no Reason nor no Scripture to believe. The Fear of Death is a Natural and Invincible Infirmary to many a true Penitent, and good, and humble, and timorous Christian, who though his Conscience accuse him not of any great and ill things, yet may magnifie every little Fault and Imperfection, and not forgive it himself, though God does, nor be at peace in his own Mind, though he be with God, 'tis a great Perfection to Conquer the Fears of Death, if it be done upon good grounds, for some have no Fear of Death out of a senseless stupidity, because they have no sense of what follows after Death: And we find the greatest part of Men who have most reason to be afraid of it, to be the least so, out of meer Natural courage and hardiness,

and for want of thinking, or believing, or considering the things of Religion and another World; others from false Principles and Mistakes, by thinking a Pardon or Absolution sets them right in the Court of Heaven, and that they may boldly appear there with some such security, or those that have low thoughts of Religion, and think a little Sorrow for their Sins, and a few Sighs, and some Prayers when they come to Dye, will carry them to Heaven as well as if they had lived never so Holily, and Righteously, and Godly. Now if Mens Confidence and Fearlessness arises from such Mistakes as these, 'tis like the hope of the Hypocrite that shall perish, *Job* 8. 13. and such presumptuous Persons only rush into Hell with their eyes shut, and see not their danger before they are in it. On the contrary, a Modest and Humble penitent Christian may be afraid where no Fear is, may judge too hardly of himself, and may be though quite out of Danger, yet not out of all Fear; for after all, God will not Judge us by our own Fears, or Hopes, or Opinion of our selves, which may be all groundless and mistaken, but he will Judge Righteous Judgment, and correct the Errors by which we may pass Judgment of our selves; and the Terms of the Gospel and not our own Thoughts shall be the Rule by which we shall be Judged at the last Day. But to take off the Fear of Death as much as we can, and to free our selves from a Slavish and Immoderate degree of it, the best Directions that can be are these two.

1. What hath been already given, duly to pre-

prepare and fit our selves for it by a timely and thorough Repentance.

2. To joyn the liveliest Act of Faith with this our Habitual Repentance, and exert that at the time when Death is near us.

(1.) To perfect our Repentance, and so to live in the habit of that and of all Goodness, that we may be the best prepared to Dye that we can be. Dye we know we must. Death if it be not now near us, and yet we do not know but it may be dogging us at the Heels, yet will certainly in a little time come up to us, and fright and startle us when it does, if we do not take great care to be ready and prepared for it. Since we must therefore necessarily encounter this great Monster, this terrible Enemy which there is no escaping but we must certainly grapple with him, let us all our Lives prepare for the Battle, let us arm our selves with the whole Armour of God and Religion, with a Careful, and Pious, and Good Life, with a timely and thorough Repentance of all our Evil ways, with a sincere, and upright, and good Conscience, and with avoiding every thing that we know is sinful and unlawful, and which will make Death terrible to us whenever it comes. Let us not be such desperate Bravoes in Sin, as to venture upon that with a false Courage, which will make us the worst of Cowards when we come to Dye; but let us be so wisely afraid of Death now, as to live with that care and exactness that we may not be afraid of it when we come to it. It were well if some Men were more afraid of Death than they are, and as I am sure they have

have all reason to be, that so they might be brought off from their Evil ways, and not run headlong upon those Dangers which are very near them, though they are not sensible of them. The Sword hangs over their head though they do not see it, and nothing but the thin thread of Life keeps it from falling upon them; they walk blindfold upon the brinks of Hell and Damnation, and it would be well if Fear would open their Eyes, and make them recover themselves before Death makes it too late. Nothing can truly and thoroughly arm us against the Fears of Death, but Repentance and a good Life: To those who have lived in the practice of them, Death is a very harmless thing, 'tis but lying down to sleep, closing the eyes and going to rest, the Bodies being senseless a while, till it awakes at the great Day of Judgment, and passing a longer night in the Grave till it arises more fresh and lively in the Morning of the Resurrection; and as for the Soul, 'tis a short and quick passage from Earth to Heaven, and therefore such have no reason to be afraid of it, when it approaches them never so near. But then,

(2.) Let the true Penitent quicken his Faith at that time, and raise that to the highest and strongest pitch, that so he may then look beyond the Grave, and see, and believe, and desire those Happy and Glorious things which God has prepared for him in another World. If we believed those as we ought, we should never be so afraid to Dye, if we were so affected with those pleasures that are above, and that are at God's Right-hand for evermore, we should

should not be so loth to part with the Pleasures
 shall I say, rather with the Troubles and the
 Miseries of this Life. Did we think as we
 ought of that perfect peace, and joy, and sa-
 tisfaction which is not to be had here, but to
 be met with only in Heaven, we should not
 be so fond to abide in this Valley of Tears, and
 not go up to those Mansions above, where is
 full Joy and Contentment. Let us fix our
 Thoughts and set our Hearts upon those Hap-
 py Regions of Bliss and Glory, and we shall
 not fear to pass through the shadow of Death
 to come to them, though the way to that Hea-
 venly *Canaan* is through a Wilderness, through
 the dark and unknown Region of Death,
 through which a thousand wandering Souls
 are always passing, yet we shall be conducted
 safely through it by Angels, who will bring
 us to the Palace of the great King, where we
 shall be received by our Blessed Master and Sa-
 viour, and by all the Saints and Holy Souls
 that are gone before us, who as they rejoyce
 at a Sinners Repentance, will now welcome
 him to his Father's House; and we shall then
 as much wonder at our selves for fearing to
 Dye, as we are now willing to Live. If the
 account which Scripture gives us of those in-
 visible Regions be true, and we do fully be-
 lieve that Joy, that Glory, that Blessedness,
 that unspeakable Happiness which is there re-
 vealed to us, this our Faith, joyn'd with our
 Repentance, should overcome the Fears of
 Death, and make us not only not afraid, but
 desire to be dissolved, and to be willing to lay
 down

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down this load and luggage of Flesh, because we know that if our earthly house of this Tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens. And there shall be no more Sin, nor Sorrow, nor Repentance: But the Blessed Penitent, now he is safely arrived at his happy Port, shall look back upon the past Hazards and Dangers he was in, and comfortably remember how his Sins like so many Rocks, had like to have split and shipwreck'd, and swallowed him up in the gulph of Perdition, and how by the wonderful Grace of God he hath happily escaped them, and is come safe to Heaven, and therefore will now offer Eternal Thanksgivings, and pay his Vows of Praise to his great Deliverer, and rejoyce evermore in his Glorious and Heavenly Salvation.

C H A P. III.

Whether all Sins are Pardonable, and may have the benefit of Repentance.

I Am next to consider, Whether all Sins are Pardonable, and may have this benefit of Repentance. This has been denyed by a great many, and particularly by the *Novatians*, who would not allow Pardon and Absolution to wilful

wilful and great Sins committed after Baptism, and this is charged upon *Smalcians* and other *locinians*, that they deny the same to heinous and habitual Sins of Relapse, into which any shall fall after they have once Repented, and been freed from them. And there are some places of Scripture that seem very much to favour these hard Opinions, as *Heb. 6. 4, 5, 6.* For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto Repentance. And *Heb. 10. 26.* For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for Sins. And *2 Pet. 2. 20, 21, 22.* For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the World, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome; the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, then after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true Proverb, The Dog is returned to his own vomit, and the Sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. And in other places the Scripture speaks of a Sin unto Death, *1 John 5. 16.* as of a more malignant and deadly Nature, and different from all other Sins which are Mortal, and Sins also unto Death without Repentance: And our Saviour says expressly of

of the Sin against the Holy Ghost, that it is unpardonable, and *shall not be forgiven, neither in this world nor the world to come*, Luke 12. 20. *Matth. 12. 32. i. e.* as St. Mark expresses it, *he hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation*, Mark 3. 29. And what that is, is not fully agreed on by Divines, and so there may be fear, if not danger of a Christians falling into it, and so into an unpardonable state, by the Holy Ghosts being so many ways concerned in his Salvation, and he having so many ways to Sin against him.

This gives therefore great trouble to a great many Minds, and if one particular Sin, or any sorts of Sin, be unpardonable by the Gospel, they will be very fearful, and can hardly be satisfied but that they have committed that Sin, and so are cut off from all hopes by it; and they will like Melancholly Persons who read of such grievous Diseases, fancy immediately that they have them themselves, and that such and such symptoms are already upon them.

If we cannot therefore assure all Persons of Pardon for all manner of Sins, however great or however circumstantiated upon their true Repentance of them, it will very much take off from the encouragements to this Duty, and by taking off Mens hopes in many cases, and shutting the door of Mercy against them, hinder them from performing this Duty, and make them if not act desperately and Madly, as Men without hopes generally do, yet throw them into a comfortless and despairing condition, and
overwhelm

overwhelm them with remediless Sorrow and Trouble.

The general scope and design of the Gospel seems to be to remove all this, *To preach good tidings unto the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the Captives, and the opening of the Prison to them that are bound, to comfort them that mourn, Isa. 61. 1. To call those to come to Christ who are weary and heavy laden, by reason of their Sins, with a promise, that he will give them rest, Matth. 11. 28. To preach Repentance and remission of sins in his name among all Nations, Luke 24. 47. without excluding any Persons, or excepting any Sins whatsoever, to proclaim a general Amnesty and Act of Pardon, to all who Repent and come in to the Gospel. Had there been an exception, as to a more notorious Traytor, to any one, though a single Sin which Mankind had been like to fall into, this would have abated both from the Goodness of God, and the Comfort of Men, when he should be represented as implacable in some cases, and never to be appeased, and the other should be left in such Danger and Hazard, that if they fell into some Sins, which it was very possible for them to do, that then there should be no hopes, nor no means of recovery for them.*

God, I doubt not, is more Merciful, and Mankind not so Miserable, as to have any Sin whatever utterly unpardonable which is Repented of, but as our Saviour says, *All manner of Sin and Blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, Marsh. 12. 31. And as Isaiah told the*
Jews

Jews of old, and it is not less so under the Gospel, *Though your Sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wooll, Isa. 1. 18.* that is, of however high a nature or degree they are, they shall upon Repentance and Amendment be done away and forgiven. No Sin is too great for the infinite Mercy of God to forgive, and the infinite Merit of Christ's Blood to atone, nor is any excepted in the Covenant of Grace which God has made with Mankind; wherein he promises universally *to be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their Sins and Iniquities he will remember no more, Heb. 8. 11. Jer. 31. 34.* without any bar or reserve to any Sin of what nature or aggravation soever. I shall therefore Examine and Answer those places of Scripture which seem to give any countenance to the other severe and cruel Doctrine, as to Sins of Apostacy after Baptism, or upon Relapse, and then largely consider the Nature of the Sin against the Holy Ghost, and how or whether that is unpardonable, so as to free all honest Minds from any trouble about it.

S E C T. I.

*Of Apostacy. Sins after Baptism.
Upon Relapse.*

First then as to those places of the *Hebrews* which are brought as the ground of the *Novatian Doctrine*, for the irremissibleness of wilful

vilful Sins committed after Baptism, they do
 not belong to any Sins of a Christian whilst he
 continues such, but to one renouncing Christi-
 anity, and wholly Apostatizing from it, even
 after he has professed it, and had miraculous
 Evidence and Conviction of it. *They who were*
Enlightned or Baptized, and have
tasted of the Heavenly gift, have been sensible
 of the Benefits of Baptism, and the Priviledges
 of Christianity, and *been made Partakers of the*
Holy Ghost, have further had those Miraculous
 and extraordinary Gifts of the Holy Ghost
 conferred upon them, which new Baptized
 Persons then very often had, and *have tasted*
the good word of God, and the powers of the world
to come, have had a sense of the excellency of
 the Gospel and the Christian Revelation, and
 those powerful and great Miracles, *and*
 which accompanied the dispensation thereof,
 and the times of the Messiah, or that have been
 duly affected with the powerful Considerations
 of Eternity and another World, which are the
 great things their Religion sets before them;
 if such as these shall (like *Julian* afterwards,
 or the *Gnosticks* then) *fall away* from all this,
 and apostatize from their Faith and Religion
 by the Fears of Persecution, or the Love of
 this World, *it is impossible to renew them again*
to Repentance, seeing this their revolt implies
 no less than *the crucifying to themselves the Son*
of God afresh, and putting him to open shame;
i. e. the Condemning of Christ as a Malefactor
and Impostor, and so joyning and consenting
with the Jews in Crucifying him as such, and
 bringing

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bringing an open reproach and discredit upon him, as if he were a false Prophet, and that upon Tryal and Experience they found his Religion to be false, and therefore forsook it. This Apostacy and renouncing the whole Religion of Christ, is meant also by *Sinning wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth*, Heb. 10. 26. It is Sinning in the same word and sense as the Apostate Angels did when they revolted from Heaven, 2 Pet. 2. 4. for in the next Verses it is called, *Treading under foot the Son of God*; i. e. Contemning him as a vile Miscreant, and as if he were not Risen from the Grave, but lay Dead there, and so were to be trod upon, and *counting the Blood of the Covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing*; as if it were shed justly, and so were the Blood of a common Malefactor, and *doing despite unto the Spirit of Grace*, reproaching all the evidence by which the Holy Ghost confirmed the Truth of Christ and his Doctrine, both in him and his Apostles. This can be no less than a Malicious Apostacy and Defection from Christianity in general, and not only a wilful breach of any of its particular Laws.

And something like unto these is that Sin unto death, in St. John, 1 Epist. 5. 16. that which deserved the utmost and severest censures; as he which under *Moses Law* sinned presumptuously, and was *adversus & void*, did make void and throw off the Law, *was to dye without Mercy*, Heb. 10. 28. So under Christianity this presumptuous Sinner was to be Spiritually cut off from

from all the Benefits of Christian Communion, and from the Prayers of the Faithful, as we find they were by the Discipline of the Primitive Church.

This was so severe at first that they denied all Peace and Absolution to such Apostates and *Lapsi*, even in *articulo Mortis*, at the point of Death, and would never receive them again into their Communion, thereby to fright all persons from all false and cowardly Compliances in those times of Danger and Persecution; but afterwards the Church was forced to abate of this rigour, which had made such Disturbances, and occasioned those great Schisms of the *Novatians* and *Donatists*. There were other Sins also for which the guilty Penitents were excluded from all Communion to the last in those purer and severer Ages, as Murder, Adultery, and those Unnatural Lusts which they call'd *Monstra*; these were never admitted to Pardon and Absolution of the Church, as appears by the Canons of those ancient Councils of *Eliberis*, *Arles* and *Ancyra*, and by the Writings of *Tertullian* and others, and the opposition made in *Africa* to the Decree of Pope *Zephyrine*, and by the milder Canons of the Council of *Nice* afterwards, but all this was only prudential, and an external Discipline in *foro humano*, which the Church altered according to its Discretion, but they did not deny all Pardon with God for those Sins upon Repentance, nor utterly cut them off from all hopes in another World, but allowed God could pardon them, tho' not the Church;

Church ; that they might be forgiven, though not in this World, yet in the World to come, according to that *Jewish* Notion, that though there were no Sacrifices nor ordinary means of Expiation for some Sins, yet that God would forgive them hereafter.

Secondly, That Sins are Pardoned after Baptism as well as before, is plain from the Incessant *Corinthian*, who though he had committed such a Sin as was not usual among the *Gentiles*, and was to be put out of the Church, and to be delivered unto Satan for it, yet this was not to cut him off from Pardon and Salvation, but as a better means to bring him to both ; it was only for the destruction of the flesh, that the Spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord, 1 Cor. 5. 5. And this sure was the design of those severe and long Penances in the Primitive Church, whereby tho' they excluded Sinners from the benefits of Communion and means of Grace, yet it was not to bereave them of all hopes of Pardon, and consign them irreversibly to Damnation, but to beget a greater terror and dread of Sin, and to make their Repentance for it more compleat and perfect, and so by these present Judgments and Severities here, to prevent their Eternal Condemnation hereafter, for this ought to be the Rule and Measure of all Church Power and Discipline, it ought to be for Edification, not for Destruction, and they could not miss of this. The Spirit of God writes to the Church of *Ephesus*, which were a company of Baptized Christians, to Remember from whence they were fallen,

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fallen, and Repent, and do their first works, Rev. 2. 5. And St. Paul threatens the Christians at Corinth, to bewail and correct those which had sinned, and not repented of the uncleanness, and fornication, and lasciviousness they had committed, 2 Cor. 12. 21. but does not denounce that they were unpardonable. Sad would it be if all wilful Sins were so after Baptism, this would make Christianity a more terrible and severe dispensation than the Law, and put us in a worse condition than we were without it, and no Man would then be Baptized till he was a Clinick and near dying, and going out of the World; but Baptism puts us into a state of Pardon, and the Grace and the Vertue of it continues all our lives; and if we sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, 1 John 2. 1. and his Mediation will upon our Repentance procure Pardon at God's hands at all times for us.

Thirdly, I shall next consider Sins of Relapse, when a Person after Sorrow and Repentance for a Sin, yet falls into it again, and repeats it after he has resolved against it, and been convicted of the heinousness of it; now this is a sad case, and shows the power of his Lusts, and the weakness of Religion upon a Mans Mind, and no Man who is in this state can be said to Repent: He is no more got rid of his Sins than a Man is of a Feaver because it intermits sometimes, and he is well by intervals, but his Fits return again upon him, which shows that the Disease is still in his Blood, as the other's Relapses do that sin still reigns in him;

because *he obeys it in the Lusts thereof.* A Man in the beginning of his Repentance from some habitual Sins, may not get rid immediately of all his Evil Customs and Sinful Inclinations, but they may sometimes draw him back again, and sometimes master and overcome him, and he may rally again, and recover himself, and at last vanquish them : Now whilst this Conflict lasts, and 'tis uncertain which side will get the better, and have the final Victory, no judgment can be made of a Mans state, because the issue is doubtful and uncertain. He is fighting and striving for his Life, for his Soul, and for Heaven, and he may by his own care and endeavours, and by the assistance of Heaven conquer and overcome his Sins, and *to him that overcometh God will give of the tree of life, Rev. 2. 7.* but if he is overcome by them, he is a slave of Sin, and a captive of the Devil, and a child of Hell, and heir of Damnation ; but what shall a Man do who has often thus relapsed into Sin after his most serious Vows and Resolutions against it, are his Sins against those unpardonable, and is there no hopes for him ? I Answer by no means, if he can but recover himself from them, and after all attempts at last get rid of them, and bring forth the contrary fruits of Repentance and Obedience. I confels such an one ought to suspect himself, and to suspect his Repentance, till by many tryals he has made it good, and confirmed it ; and he ought to be doubly watchful over himself, and to take heed least Sin enter again at any of those weak places at which it used to have

ve admittance, and to fortifie himself against those Temptations and Opportunities that ed to betray him to it, and therefore to keep s Mind to a close sense of Religion, and to careful use of all the Means and Instruments it, and to beg earnestly of Heaven, Grace proportionable to his needs, and then if it be ot his own fault, it will certainly be sufficient r him. But such Relapses, though they are ot quite hopeles, nor put a Man into a con- tion that is desperate, yet they are very angerous, they grieve God's Holy Spirit, they ve a new Wound to our Consciences, they ake the old Wound that was healed bleed fresh, and render it more difficult to be cured gain, and more ready to mortifie and become curable, they bring the Mind to a weakness, nd unsteadiness, and irresolution, and to have o power or command over it self, but let its ood Purposes and Principles be bore down by weak Lust or a silly Temptation, and one uch fatal Relapse sets it back a great way, and akes it with great difficulty roll up the same one which hath driven it so much downwards, nd with greater labour set upon the same work and design, which such a miscarriage akes more hard to be effected.

They who make Repentance lye in some ransient Acts, which upon new Sins are to be epeated *toties quoties*, like a Medicine to be aken as often as the same illness returns, for- get that Repentance is a state of Health after Sicknes, a state of Vertue and Obedience af- ter Vice and Disobedience, and that when such

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a state is once broken, 'tis not easie to be made whole again, but like a broken Limb, it cannot be set without great pain, and long time to grow together again, and that if it be often broken it will contract an habitual Weakness and Lameness.

How long God will suffer a Sinner thus to continue in a state of Falling and Rising, Repenting and Relapsing, before he cuts him off from any hopes of Pardon or Benefit of Repentance, we do not know, nor how long a hardened impenitent Wretch may go on in a course of Sinning before the means of Grace, and the day of Salvation may be over with him; so that if he knock, God will not open, and there shall be *no place found for his Repentance.* This is a secret likewise which is only in the breast of the Almighty, who threatens that *his Spirit shall not always strive with Man,* Gen. 6. 3. And *behold now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation,* 2 Cor. 6. 2. And *to day if ye will hear his voice harden not your hearts,* Heb. 3. 15. And *if thou in this thy day hadst known the things belonging to thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes,* Luke 19. 42. And *seek the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near,* Isa. 55. 6. So that God is not always to be found, nor always near, and it may be too late for the things of our peace, and the accepted time, and the day of Salvation may not continue always, but a Man may sin so long till God will withdraw his Grace, and may come to an unpardonable pitch and an impenitent state, and may *despise the riches*

riches of God's goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth to Repentance : But after his hardness and impenitent heart, may treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, Rom. 2. 4, 5.

This should keep us from neglecting the present opportunities, and not put off our Repentance from day to day ; But to day, while it is called to day, hearken to his voice, lest we be hardened with the deceitfulness of sin. But if any be under those Fears that he has brought himself to that sad state, this is the only true satisfaction can be given him ; Whilst he is willing to Repent, and has a just sense of his Sins, and of his ill state, he is not hardened, and if God's Grace doth so far work upon his Mind as to make him see and apprehend the necessity of Repentance, and the forsaking all his evil ways, then it is not quite withdrawn from him ; and if he be willing to try all means, and use his best endeavours to get rid of his Sins, there is great hopes that he may effect this, for God will never be wanting to assist our sincere Wills and hearty Endeavours ; and if his Spirit worketh in us to will and to desire to leave our Sins from a right apprehension of the Danger and Mischief of them, and produce such Convictions and Illuminations in our Mind, it is certain it hath not abandoned or deserted us, and it will work in us to do also, and to effect and perform those good thoughts and purposes if we persist in them, and endeavour with our utmost power to make them

good and effectual. No Man is cut off from Pardon who Repents and becomes a good Man, tho' he has been never so bad an one, and no Man will have God's Grace denyed him, who is at any time sincerely willing and desirous to make use of it; but 'tis a hard and insensible state that has sinn'd away its Life, and its day of Grace, and has only deep Horrors and fruitless Sorrows when it is too late to amend and become a good Man, that is hopeless and desperate.

S E C T. II.

Of the Sin against the Holy Ghost, its Nature, and whether Pardonable or no.

WHat is the particular Nature of the Sin against the Holy Ghost, and wherein that which is so dreadful does truly consist, the Scripture methinks is very plain, though they who have left that, and followed their own or others Conjectures and Opinions about it, are very confused and intricate, and very different and divided among themselves. They have made a great many Sins against the Holy Ghost, when God has no where in Scripture made but one, and that being of so dreadful and heinous a Nature, we must be careful to apply it no further than we have warrant from the Word of God, and from our Saviour who best knew it; and it appears clearly from his Discourse about it to be this, A Blasphemous charging of the Miracles he did by the Power of the Holy Ghost

Ghost to the Power of the Devil. This the Pharisees did *Match.* 12. 24. when Christ had wrought a mighty Cure and Miracle upon a Demoniack to the admiration of all the People that had brought him unto him, *ver.* 21. *Then was brought unto him one possessed of a Devil, blind and dumb, and he healed him, inso-much that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the Son of David? But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out Devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the Devils.* Our Saviour when he had confuted that unreasonable and malicious Calumny against him, by showing how unlikely it was that the Devil should thus destroy his own Kingdom and Interest by being divided against himself, and lending him his Power to cast out Devils, and that it might as well be pretended that all Miracles that were done by their Prophets of old, or by others amongst them afterwards, were performed by a Diabolical Power as well as his, and so they would destroy the force and credit of their own Miracles as well as those he did, he immediately proceeds to discourage of this Sin, *Wherefore I say unto you, all manner of Sin and Blasphemy shall be forgiven unto Men, but the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto them.* And he repeats it again in the next Verse, *And whatsoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man it shall be forgiven him; that is, ye may with less Guilt and Danger abuse me, for any thing else that does not so immediately reflect upon, and reproach the* Spt.

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Spirit of God, as when ye called me *wine-bibber, and glutton, and a friend of Publicans and Sinners*, but *whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost*; if ye use any reproachful sayings against the Spirit of God by which I do my Miracles, this shall not be forgiven, neither in this world nor in the world to come. Neither here, nor as some of you vainly expect hereafter, but shall be certainly and severely punish'd in both. Now here is no mention at all, nor the least intimation of those other Sins in which some have placed this Sin against the Holy Ghost; as in final Impenitence, which the *Pharisees* could not then be charged with, nor Apostacy from Christianity, which they had not at all professed, nor were by this very likely to do, nor denying the Truth for fear of Suffering, as in the instance of *Francis Spira*, which is often said to be his Sin, nor any of the six Sins in which the Schoolmen have placed it, as Envy-ing our Brothers Graces, Impugning the known Truth, Obstinacy, Impenitency, Desperation and Presumption, which two latter are un luckily put together to make this one Sin, when they are so contrary to themselves. Whatever mixture there might be of these, or any of these, or the like Sins, in the Minds of the *Pharisees* who committed this Sin against the Holy Ghost, yet those are no more this particular Sin here meant by our Saviour, than Pride and Covetousness, and other Sins that might go a great way, and be no small causes to bring them to this Sin, and dispose their Minds for it; but *St. Mark* sets the thing beyond

yond all dispute in chap. 3. ver. 28, 29, 30. where he relates these words of our Saviour, thus, *Verily I say unto you, all Sins shall be forgiven unto the Sons of Men, and Blasphemies wherewith soever they shall Blaspheme: But he that shall Blaspheme against the Holy Ghost shall never have forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal Damnation.* And then he gives the reason of our Saviour's saying all this to them, namely, *because they said he hath an unclean Spirit; i. e. a Diabolical and Impure one, which makes it as manifest as can be desired, that this their Sin was their Blaspheming and Speaking so reproachfully of the Holy Ghost which was in Christ, as if that were not the Holy Spirit of God, but an Unclean and a Devilish Spirit. How great and horrid a Sin this was, will appear from these Four Considerations.*

1. It tended to destroy the whole Truth of Christianity, and consequently to rob the World of all the benefit it has by it. There could nothing so Malicious be contrived to undermine the Foundation of the Gospel, as this assertion of the *Pharisees*, that our Saviour wrought his Miracles by the help of an Evil or Unclean Spirit; for this was to make him a Magician, a confederate with the Devil, and so to represent his Religion as a work and contrivance of Hell, that could tend only to the Mischief and Destruction of the World: For if no good thing could come out of *Galilee*, as in a Proverbial derision they gave out to the People, to be sure no good thing could come from Hell and from evil Spirits. The Devil would

would never lend his Power had he been able, to promote or establish any thing but a false Religion, that should withdraw the World from the Worship of the true God. The greatest demonstration for the Truth of Christianity were the Miracles of Christ, as he often appeals to them, *John* 10. 37, 38. *John* 14. 11. *Matth.* 11. 4. and if these were done not by a Divine but a Diabolical Power, and by a compact with the Devil, they are then the greatest Arguments against it; for then it may be only a mystery of iniquity brought into the World by him *whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness, 2 Thes.* 2. 9, 20. as Antichristianism is described.

2. It tends not only to undermine the Truth of Christianity, but of all Revelation whatever from God. The greatest proof and demonstration that can be given to any Prophet that comes from God to reveal his Will to Men, is his working of Miracles, and satisfying those he is sent to, that he has a Divine Authority and Commission, by his showing his Credentials from God, who would never suffer a Cheat and Impostor to do such mighty works as must necessarily cheat and deceive those that see them. Now if notwithstanding that he teach nothing contrary to the Nature of God, nor of Good and Evil, and yet perform such wonderful Miracles as can be done only by the Finger of God, and by a Divine Power; if we will still suspect this, then we can never be satisfied of the truth of any Revelation from
Heaven,

Heaven, and so the *Pharisees* did not only undermine Christianity, but even their own Law; for it might with as much reason be said, that *Moses* and the Prophets who pretended to come from God, and wrought Miracles to show they did so, yet were only the Prophets and Embassadors of the Devil, and did all their Miracles by his Power, as of Christ.

3. This must proceed from a very spiteful Temper and malicious Humour that made them speak this against their Consciences, and the sense of their own Minds. Sure they who were eye-witnesses of his Miracles, and so had the best and fullest evidence of the truth of them, and who heard the excellency of his Discourses and Sermons, in which was nothing contrary to the Worship of the true God, or the Moral Duties of Religion, they must as our Saviour once told them, *know both him and also whence he was, John 7. 28.* When they must be convinced that he was both an innocent and good Man himself, and that his Doctrine commanded the highest Vertue and Goodness, and tended to destroy the whole Power and Interest of the Devil in the World, they could not surely believe themselves, or think this their black charge was true; but when they saw the People amazed at his Healing a Demoniack, and saying, *Is not this the Son of David? Matt. 12. 23.* And so they feared that they should have lost their Power and Authority together with their Law, and that the People should have left them and followed him, then they gave out this vile and abominable reflection
upon

upon him, that he did all this by the Power of the Devil, which was the utmost shift that Malice could invent to blind the eyes of others against a Truth which they could hardly be supposed not to see themselves.

4. It was the most taunting, reproachful Slander against God and his Holy Spirit that could possibly be, and therefore is always called *Blasphemy*, which is the most daring, provoking and transcendent Crime against God that can be, and proceeds from the most contemptuous and scornful, most wretched and depraved temper of Mind. To slander and calumniate the Son of Man was a great Sin, to call a Sober and Temperate Person a Glutton and Wine-bibber, a friend of Publicans and Sinners, and to raise slanderous and false stories against any Mans Credit, is one of the greatest though the commonest Sins; but to proceed so far as to slander and reproach God, this was accounted by one of the Heathens as bad or worse than to deny him, but to represent the Holy and Blessed Spirit of God as an Apostate Angel, as a Hellish Fiend, and to reproach and scoff, and calumniate whatever he does for the Good and Salvation of Mankind, as the work and intrigue of the Devil: This is such an horrid Sin, that our Saviour says, *it should not be forgiven*, but bring certain Judgment upon them.

I come now to inquire how and upon what account it is Unpardonable, which is the greatest difficulty about it. Now though no Sin in its own Nature be unpardonable, because none
so

so great but that the infinite Mercy and Goodness of God does still exceed it, and none is exempted from that General and Gracious Promise of Pardon which he hath made to Mankind, and none has so much Guilt in it, but that the Blood of Christ and Merit of his Sacrifice is able to atone and expiate for it, and none does so far corrupt and deprave the Mind but that the Grace of God can restore and amend it; yet a Sin may however be unpardonable by reason of some circumstances attending it, and chiefly upon these three accounts.

1. As not being Repented of, for so every wilful Sin is unpardonable: For though the Gospel proposes Mercy and Pardon to every Sin and Sinner without exception, yet 'tis upon this never failing condition of Repentance and Amendment, without which we shall as certainly perish, as if there had been no place for Mercy at all, but we had stood under an irreversible decree of Condemnation for the first Sin we had committed. The Covenant of Grace is made upon that Condition on our part, which if we fail of, we shall as certainly lose the benefit of it as if there had been no such Covenant made.

2. That Sin is also unpardonable by the standing terms of the Divine Mercy, which is not Curable by all the ordinary means of the Divine Grace, but resists and baffles all those remedies which can be used to that purpose. As a Disease is incurable when it is too strong for all the Remedies that can be used against it, so is a Sin unpardonable when it is too hard
for

for all the means whatsoever that are proper to amend it. As when a Man will be an Infidel and Disobedient to God when he sees plain Miracles before his face, and will not be convinced by all these, which are the best and only means to that purpose, when he will still be obstinate, and harden himself against the highest evidence that is possible, as *Pharaoh* did, when he could not but confess that the Miracles were done by the Finger of God, and yet would not hearken unto him; or as the *Pharisees*, and some of the *Jews*, who would not be perswaded to Christianity by all the visible Wonders, and extraordinary Miracles wrought by Christ and his Apostles. What was there more to be done to satisfy those Men? And how could any thing that God and the Divine Power was able to do, convince them of their Infidelity, if this would not? And so now when all the Considerations, and all the credible Evidences of Religion will not work upon a Man, nor perswade him to a good Life; when he resists all the means of Grace that God has appointed, he then resists the last and utmost remedy that should do him good, and so is necessarily in a hopeless incurable state and condition.

3. That Sin is unpardonable which provokes God to withdraw his Spirit, and all the influences of the Divine Grace, and to give them up to a spirit of slumber and a reprobate sense, and hardness of Heart, as he is sometimes said to do, if not for one Sin, yet for a great many obstinately and irreclaimably continued in.

And

And now let us examine the Sin against the Holy Ghost by these three ways.

(1.) Can it be said to be unpardonable because unrepented of? It seemeth not upon this account, because it is probable that many of those who were guilty of it did afterwards Repent, and turn Christians. Among the many numerous Profelytes to Christianity in the time of our Saviour, and especially of the Apostles, it cannot be proved or thought that there were not some of those made Converts that had fall'n into it; and Christ when he Prayed for his Enemies, and for his Crucifiers, most earnestly entreated his Father *to forgive them* all without any exception, *Luke 23. 24.* by which he had plainly some hopes of their Repentance and Amendment, and if he had not, it would have been in vain to have used so many means as he did afterwards to that purpose; besides that he intimates not the least word to them of their Impenitence, nor was that to be said of them till the last, *this* would not sufficiently distinguish this Sin from any other great and wilful one, for any such unrepented of and that by a particular Repentance, is unpardonable as well as this against the Holy Ghost, unless we will venture to say what we have no sufficient warrant for, and therefore is very bold, and especially when 'tis a kind of limiting the Grace and Mercy of God, that Men could never Repent of this as they can of all others, but that God who hath opened a door of Mercy and Repentance in all other cases, hath absolutely shut it

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in this, so that they shall never be able nor willing to enter in.

(2.) Is it unpardonable upon the second account, as it was not curable by any means that God had appointed and thought fit to use to that purpose? This it seems not to be neither, because God had not yet made use of all the means that he intended for the Conversion of the *Jews*, and the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*. Our Saviour indeed had done a great many Miracles to testify his Divine Power, but still there were a great many more which remained behind, and which he had not yet performed. If we look into the Gospel of *St. Matthew* and *St. Mark*, and observe the time when our Saviour had his Discourse of this Sin, we shall find he wrought many very considerable Miracles after that; and what was the design of all them, but to perswade those to believe in him, and to embrace Christianity, who were not perswaded so to do by his former ones. And there remained another Motive behind, which was an evidence even beyond all, and which was such an Argument to convince the *Jewish* Infidelity, as did outdo almost all the other Miracles of our Saviour, and that was his Resurrection from the Dead. This was the great and irresistible proof for the Truth of Christ and his Religion, and of this especially the Apostles were to be Witnesses to all the World, as being the strongest demonstration of Christianity; and it is beyond all controversy, that a great many who were not brought to believe in Christ for his Miracles which they

saw

saw him do, or had as much reason to believe as if they saw him, yet were afterwards convinced and believed upon his Resurrection; and yet besides this sign, which our Saviour says *was to be given them* after they had charged him to do his Miracles by an unclean Spirit, *Matth. 16. 4.* for that was meant by the sign of the Prophet *Jonas*, there yet remained another means to cure the Infidelity of these People, and bring them off from their unreasonable unbelief, and that was the sending the Holy Ghost in so visible a manner upon the Apostles on the Day of *Pentecost*, whereby the *Jews* saw and heard those poor unlearned Men, who were Fishermen, and Publicans, and Persons of ordinary Rank, and little Education, speak all sorts of Tongues and Languages, more than the Learnedest of their own Rabbies were able to do, and work all sorts of Miracles as great as ever *Moses*, or any of their Prophets were recorded to perform. This also without doubt made a great many Proselytes to Christ and his Religion that were not so before, and brought in vast numbers of Believers into the Church, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles. Now when so many means were appointed and used by God, and those such strong and powerful ones, even after the *Jews* had been guilty of that vile reproach of many of our Saviour's Miracles, who can say that this Sin was not Curable by any Remedies when they were not all used, but there were still many others to be applied? And who can say that the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* had resisted

the last means of Conviction, when our Saviour and his Apostles had after that so many others to offer to them, and which might probably prevail upon them? It seemeth more likely from this which is so plain and undeniable, that the Sin against the Holy Ghost was the resisting all the means whatever that were or could be used by the Spirit of God, both in Christ and the Apostles too for the bringing Men to Christianity, and so it became unpardonable because it baffled the last means that could be used against it; and as to the word *βλασφημία* or reproach, which ought to be taken notice of as the very specifick form and essential difference of this Sin, none seem to be more literally guilty of that, no not the Scribes and Pharisees, who said, *Christ did his Miracles and cast out Devils by Beelzebub*, or an evil Spirit, than they who in the time of the Apostles, when they saw them filled with the Holy Ghost, and speaking with other Tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance, *Acts 2. 4* yet mocking and vilely reproaching all this, said, *These men are full of new wine*, ver. 13. The ascribing this visible Power of the Holy Ghost on the Apostles to Drunkenness, and *χλιδὴς* *Corres* mocking at all this, as if they had been inspired with the Spirit of Wine, or of *Bacchus*, rather than the Spirit of God, seems as great a Reproach and Calumny to him, as the *βλασφημία* against the Miracles of Christ and the ascribing them to an unclean Spirit: And this was more especially the time of the Spirit's economy and dispensation, when he was so plentifully

plentifully poured out upon the Apostles and other Christians, and was sent into the World to be Christ's Advocate, and the publick Patron of Christianity, whereas before when Christ was not glorified, it is expressly said that the Holy Ghost was not yet given; *John* 7. 39. For all these Reasons I should be inclined to be of their Mind, who think this to be the true Sin against the Holy Ghost, which is therefore Unpardonable because Uncurable by all the means which the Spirit of God could use, were not the words of St. *Matthew*, and St. *Mark* especially, so plain, that our Saviour spoke of this Sin *because the Scribes and Pharisees said, He hath an unclean Spirit*, *Mark* 3. 30. and because there is no other thing mentioned by our Saviour as the reason of his discourse about it, but because when he had healed the Blind, and the Dumb, and him that was possessed with a Devil, the *Pharisees* said, *This fellow doth not cast out Devils, but by Beelzebub the Prince of the Devils*, *Matth.* 12. 22, 24. Our Saviour did not only forewarn the *Pharisees*, and tell them that this Calumny of theirs came very near, and was a preparation to the Sin against the Holy Ghost, and that this would be likely to bring them to commit that afterwards, if they took not great care of themselves; but he seems plainly to charge them as already guilty, and not meerly in danger of it, and that which they had already said was no doubt a most horrid Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, and nothing could be worse than to reproach the Spirit that was in Christ himself, to whom he was

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given not by measure, but in a more full and extraordinary manner than he was to others afterwards : For though the Holy Ghost was not before given to the Apostles nor other Christians till Christ was ascended into Heaven, yet he was given to him, and to reproach him in him, was like the reproaching the Authority of a Prince, not only in his Envoys and Embassadors but in his own Son.

So that allowing the Sin against the Holy Ghost to be the ascribing the Miracles of Christ to the Power of the Devil, which seems to be the plainest and simplest account of it, and most agreeable to the words of our Saviour, and to the only places of Scripture where it is ever mentioned, and in such a difficult matter we must be careful not to venture further than we have clear Authority from the Scripture it self, *then* from what has been largely said on this Head, it does not seem that this Sin was therefore unpardonable, because it had resisted and been too hard for all, even the last means of Conviction which was to be used to recover Men from it, since there were many others that God had appointed after that.

(3.) In the Third place, Can we say it is unpardonable upon another account, because God was thereby provoked to withdraw his Grace and Spirit from those who were guilty of it, and to give them up to hardness of Heart, and an uncurable state of Mind ? This we must not say of any but where God himself has expressly declared it, and it would be great Rashness as well as Uncharitableness to pronounce

nounce this of any, but where God has first pronounced it, which he has not, that I know of, of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* upon the account of this Sin against the Holy Ghost. Our Saviour indeed charges this in some measure upon the whole *Jewish* Nation, who believed not in him notwithstanding the mighty works which they saw him do, and this was a partial but not a total nor an incurable hardness to all, nor so far as we know to the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* themselves, but there were means still used to recover them, which would have been all in vain and to no purpose, if they had been under an irrecoverable and judicial hardness, and it had not been only *blindness* or hardness in part which had happened to *Israel*, Rom. 11. 25. or to the *Jews*. And we shall venture too far out of our depth, if we offer to say that God made use of many Means and Remedies to convince and convert the *Jews*, the *Scribes* and the *Pharisees*, when he had appointed and decreed that none of those should have any effect or good operation upon them, this will hardly be consistent with the Goodness and Mercy, or with the Truth and Sincerity of the Blessed God, nor does he ever for any one Sin, but for a long obstinate course of many provoking Sins continued in irreclaimably against the Methods of Divine Grace, give up any Person to hardness of Heart.

There remains, I confess, another way by which a Sin may become unpardonable, and that is by being exempted by God from the general Promise and Covenant of Pardon which

he hath made with Mankind. He who has all Sovereign Power, and an entire Right of Punishment, and upon whose Free Grace and Arbitrary Favour all Pardon and Forgiveness depends, may except what Sin he pleases out of his General Act of Grace and Proclamation of Pardon and Indemnity, but this surely should be done particularly and by name, and in the very Act and Proclamation it self, there in the very Charter and Covenant of Grace which God has signed with Mankind, this ought to be expressly exempted, and whether this Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost be so or no is the Question, or whether this expression of our Saviour's concerning it, *that it shall not be forgiven*, may be mollified and understood not in the utmost rigour of the Word, but as a great many of the best Interpreters of Scripture have judged, particularly St. Chrysostome of old, and Dr. Hammond of late, that this Sin shall hardly and not without great difficulty be forgiven, and not so soon or so easily as other Sins, that it supposes and proceeds from such a corruption of the Mind that is more dangerous and more hard to be Cured than any other Distempers it is subject to, but yet that it is not quite impossible, as the words literally taken seem to imply. I shall offer you the Reasons that plead for this Opinion, and then determine what is most safe and satisfying in this matter.

1. It is very usual in Scripture to represent a thing that is very hard and difficult, as if it were utterly impossible, and never could be.

This

This our Saviour himself does in the case of the Rich Mans entering into the Kingdom of Heaven ; to expresse the hardnes of it, he does it by a thing that is utterly impossible, *Matth.* 19. 24. *It is easier for a Camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a Rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.* And so does the Prophet also make use of a Natural impossibility to represent the great difficulty of a Mans turning from a long course and custom of Sinning, *Jer.* 13. 23. *Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots, then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil.* Not but it is possible, notwithstanding those Proverbial expressions, that a Man who has been accustomed to do evil a very great while may yet be brought off from his Sins, and become a good Man, or else all the Exhortations to Repentance, and Promises of the Gospel are in vain, and so may a good Man become a very bad one too, and fall from his own stedfastness, and become guilty of abominable Sins : As *David* did that was a Man after God's own Heart, notwithstanding that *St. John* in the same way and manner of expression with these, declares concerning him, *1 Epist.* 3. 9. *Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin ; for his seed remaineth in him : and he cannot sin because he is born of God.* That Phrase, *he cannot*, denotes not an utter impossibility, for the Prophet as well as Experience too plainly show the contrary, that a righteous man may turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and dye in it, *Ezek.* 18. 26. These are sometimes so
express

expressed in Scripture, as they often are also amongst Men, as if there were no hopes, nor no probable means of effecting a thing, when yet there are very certain ones, as in that expression, 1 Sam. 2. 25. not a little parallel to this, *If one man sin against another the judge shall judge him, but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall intreat for him?* Not that there is no Advocate, nor no way of interceding with God when a Man thus sins against him, but to show the guilt and danger of it above the other. That place of the *Hebrews*, chap. 6. ver. 4. *For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, &c. If they shall fall away to renew them again to Repentance;* that is by very good Interpreters thought to denote only great difficulty, and not impossibility in the utmost rigour and strictness, which it is plain none of the other Phrases, however they may sound, must be taken in; and therefore this expression of our Saviour concerning the Sin against the Holy Ghost, they think may be mollified and understood with the same largeness and latitude as those, and to import only thus much, that it shall be more difficultly repented of, and so more hardly forgiven than any other Sins.

2. Both the first part of this Verse, *That all manner of Sins and Blasphemies shall be forgiven unto men*, and many other absolute and unconditional Promises, or Threatnings, or like Declarations in Scripture, must not, they say, be too rigorously and literally understood; for if they are, the truth which is now evident in them, as they are taken with that fairness and equity,

equity, and those supposals which must go along with them, will be forced out, and they will become false; for it will not be true, *that all manner of Sins and Blasphemies shall be forgiven unto men*, for then none should be damned or made miserable in another World. And when St. Paul says, *They that do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of Heaven*, Gal. 5. 21. it must not be made a certain and general conclusion from thence, that none who were ever guilty of any one of those Sins, whereof he there gives us a black Catalogue shall ever be saved, nor become capable of entering into Heaven, but that they shall not be so without Repentance and Amendment, though that is not there mentioned, nor any provision concerning that is so much as intimated in that place; nor is that, tho' necessary, Condition to the forgiveness of every Sin exprest or put down in our Saviour's general Declaration, *that all manner of sins and blasphemies shall be forgiven unto men*, but it is without all Controversie to be supposed; and the same allowances that are to be made to all these and the like expressions of Scripture, without which, if they are strained over-rigorously, they would not be true, these they think reasonable to apply to our Saviour's Expression concerning this Sin, and that where it is said *not to be forgiven*, that is, not without a very particular and full Repentance of it. And to strengthen this a little further, they observe that there is another Phrase and Expression concerning this Sin, used by our Saviour, where the sense must not be

be forced so far as the words would seem to carry it, and that is this, *That it shall not be forgiven neither in this world, nor in the world to come, Matth. 12. 32.* As if our Saviour did thereby intimate that any Sins should be pardoned in another World, which are not in this. Some Interpreters think that some of the *Jews* had this opinion as the *Papists* now have, and that our Saviour therefore used the expression to take off all hopes from them that had such a vain belief, and levelled his words against that, but I rather think this to be the plain sense, that it was only a common Phrase among the *Jews*, that the thing should not be, or never be, without regard to any such opinion, which we have not sufficient authority to prove the *Jews* had, but only that Death they thought was a kind of Expiation for some Sins in their Life : However this Phrase must have some allowance made for the words of it, and so they would have the other.

3. Another Reason for the abating the severity of the Expression concerning this, is that there are other Sins which seem equal to this in guilt and heinousness, which are yet all declared to be pardonable ; and those not only the most wilful Sins, against Natural Light as well as Revealed Religion, but against Christianity and even the Holy Ghost ; such as were those of the Heathen World, described *Rom. 2.* and yet they were received into the Christian Religion, and made partakers of the Christian Covenant, as 'tis plain many of the *Corinthians* also were, whose Names were put in the List
of

of the vilest Sinners, 1 Cor. 6. 11. And the Apostle expressly tells them, *That such were some of them ; to wit, Fornicators, Idolaters, Adulterers, Effeminate, Abusers of themselves with Mankind, Thieves, Covetous, Drunkards, Revilers, Extortioners, ver. 9, 10. and yet these very Men were washed, were sanctified, were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God, ver. 11.* And St. Peter's denial of his Master after he had seen all his Miracles, and been so fully convinced by them that he was, as he had confest, the Son of God, was a very great Sin, yet upon his repenting and weeping bitterly for it, it was forgiven. Nay, they who treated our Saviour with the basest and the cruelest usage, and at last barbarously Murdered him, our Saviour prayed his Father even to forgive these ; and therefore that greatest of Sins, the putting an innocent Man to death, and Crucifying the very Son of God, this was not excluded from Pardon, but the very Blood that they thus villanously shed was an Expiation for the very Sin of shedding of it. And if it be said, that these however great and horrid Sins, yet were not so immediately Sins against the Holy Ghost, against whom peculiarly this unpardonable Sin is committed, if we carefully examine the Bible we shall find a great many Sins and Provocations, chiefly, if not directly against him, wherein he was particularly affronted, if not blasphemed and reproached, and yet not unpardonable. St. Paul owns himself a Blasphemer as well as a Persecutor, 1 Tim. 1. 13. and wherein can we think

think his Blasphemy consisted? Not in Blaspheming God, the God of *Israel*, for he was a very strict and Religious Worshipper of him according to the Law, and the strictest Sect of the *Jews*; but it must be in Blaspheming Christianity, and such things as were done to the spreading and confirmation of that. And nothing seems to be so likely a subject of his Blasphemy as the Miracles of Christ and the Apostles, because nothing was so strong an Argument for the Christian Religion, which could not well be reproached, unless those were evil spoken of, and yet he obtained Mercy, and became the great instance of an hearty Penitent, and a zealous Convert. But we have more particular Instances of some Sins against the Holy Ghost himself, that tended to Reproach and Dishonour him in a high measure, and yet are no where declared to be Unpardonable. *Ananias* is said to lye to the Holy Ghost, *Acts* 5. 3. and to tempt the Spirit of the Lord, *ver.* 9. and virtually to deny his Knowledge and Omniscience, by denying part of the Money for which he had sold his Estate that was devoted by him to the Church; and *Simon Magus* who offered Money that he might purchase the Holy Ghost, and thought a few pieces of Silver a just Price, and valuable Consideration for him, and that the Power of God might be bought and sold for a little Money; He did reproach the Holy Ghost, by which the Apostles did their Miracles, in the highest manner; *Acts* 8. 19. and therefore *St. Peter* very severely reproves him, *ver.* 20. *Tby Money perish with thee;*

ther, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with Money. And that expression might have been thought to have put him into an irreverfible ftate of Ruin and Perdition, had not St. Peter added what fhews it to be otherwife; *ver. 22. Repent therefore of this thy wickednefs, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.* And there is another Instance that feems as great and immediate a reproach to the Holy Ghofl as what the *Pharifees* were guilty of, in charging the Miracles which Chrift wrought by the Power of the Holy Ghofl to an Evil Spirit, and that was the mocking at the Difciples upon whom the Holy Ghofl was poured out on the day of *Pentecoft*, as if they had been infpired with new Wine, *Acts 2. 13.* and yet this has no Mark fet upon it by the Apostles, whereby it can be certainly known to be either the Sin againft the Holy Ghofl meant by our Saviour, or a Sin that was unpardonable.

4. As there are other Sins that feem equal to this yet certainly Pardonable, fo there are expreffions concerning fome other Sins which feem as much to exclude them from all hopes of remiffion, and to pafs as fevere and desperate a Sentence upon them, as Chrift does here upon this; and yet the beft Interpreters think they admit of an abatement and mitigation, as in *Heb. 6. 4, 5, 6.* For it is impoffible for thofe who were once enlightened, and have tafled of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghofl, and have tafled the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come: If they fhall fall away,

away, to renew them again unto Repentance, seeing they crucifie to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. And again, *Heb. 10. 26.* For if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin. The Sin that is meant in both these places is most probably the Apostatizing from and renouncing of Christianity, which the Christians were then in great danger of in those times of Danger and Persecution, and therefore the Apostles had all reason to represent it as the most Hazardous and Guilty, and to let them know that after they had once fallen from their Baptism, they could not be renewed by another Baptism, and after they had rejected the Sacrifice of Christ, there was no other Sacrifice to be expected to be offered for their Sins, nor was Christ to dye more than once: This was indeed a very horrid Sin, and to those especially who had probably had extraordinary Gifts communicated to them, as the Phrases there used seem to denote. These might well be charged with those tremendous expressions, *ver. 29.* That they had trodden under foot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant wherewith they were sanctified, an unholy thing, and done despite unto the Spirit of Grace. But yet the Primitive Church, how severe soever it was at first to the Lapsi in denying them Communion after they had Apostatized, yet it was the same also to many other Sins, to whom it utterly denied the Communion of the Church for ever as well as to Apostacy, though the Persons were never

ver so penitent who committed them : And
 whilst they kept to this most severe Discipline,
 which they were forced afterwards to abate,
 yet they did not peremptorily sentence those
 penitent Apostates, nor any others, to certain
 Perdition, but left them to the Mercy of God,
 for which they would not engage to be Spon-
 sors or Sureties, as not being able to ascertain
 them of it ; and this is the most I think, of
 what St. John says of the *sin unto death* : I do
 not say that we shall pray for it, 1 John 5. 16. i. e.
 we cannot have such an assurance that God will
 hear the Prayers for that as for other Sins, and
 therefore we cannot so confidently encourage
 Men to pray for it, tho' he does not at all for-
 bid them to do it. This *Sin unto Death* was
 very likely also to be Apostacy from Christia-
 nity to the Idolatry of the *Gnosticks* or the *Gen-
 tiles*, and that was certainly a very deadly Sin,
 and such as was not to have the benefit of the
 Prayers of the Church ; but to say that this
 would never be Pardoned, after St. Peter's de-
 nyal of his Master was, and after the Church
 did frequently admit the *Lapsi* at least to Lay-
 Communion, I think we ought to have a more
 plain and manifest Revelation of the Will of
 God in that matter than we have from that dif-
 ficult place. However from these three pla-
 ces which come the nearest to this Sin, though
 there is no mention of it in any of them, it ap-
 pears that either other Sins, as well as that par-
 ticular one of the *Pharisees*, may be represented
 unpardonable, or else that those expressions
 N which

which are used to set out the guilt of those Sins are yet to be mollified and abated. But,

Lastly, The Evangelical Covenant of Pardon and Forgiveness being exprest in such general and large terms as extend universally to all manner of Sins, without any exception whatsoever; and there being no one Sin whatever exempted out of that in the Charter it self, or in the Form of Absolution prescribed by Christ, *Matth. 18. 18. John 20. 23.* they think it is more agreeable to say, that no one particular Sin, how great soever, is unpardonable by the Gospel; and that this will be a greater force and violence to those many Promises of the Gospel, than to mitigate the severity of those expressions which seem to speak otherwise of some Sins, and particularly of that against the Holy Ghost: And therefore to come to a resolution in this matter that may be safe and satisfying, I shall do it very briefly in two particulars.

1. I say, That either for those Reasons the Expression here may be mollified, and not taken in its literal and rigorous sense, but so as to import the great guilt of the Sin and difficulty of its Pardon, but not the utter impossibility. Or else,

2. That there were some particular circumstances in that Sin of the *Pharisees*, which make it a Sin proper to them in those times, and such as Christians are not now in any possible danger of committing; for though we have sufficient Reasons to believe the truth of Christianity upon the account of the Miracles done

by

by our Saviour, and we have an unquestioned assurance of the truth of those from undoubted History, and universal Testimony and Tradition, yet we cannot have that ocular Evidence, and visible Demonstration of them that the *Jews* and *Pharisees* had; and therefore if any of the *Jews* in our days who have swallowed many of them this Blasphemous account of Christ and his Miracles, that he did them all by the Power of Magick which he learned in *Egypt*, if they do now vent this horrid Calumny, yet I think they are not so perfectly Criminal, nor is this so high a degree of villany in them as it was in their Fore-fathers, who saw the very Miracles done before their faces, which is the highest evidence that can be. And unless the Person be in all those circumstances that they were, which would make him a great deal more inexcusable, I question whether he can be charged with this Sin. And therefore as a Conclusion from the whole, and as the most useful remark from this Subject, I shall advise these two things.

(1.) That no Sinner be discouraged from Leaving his Sins howsoever great, nor from Hopes of the Divine Mercy, upon any ungrounded Fears that he is fallen into this Sin, and so is in a hopeless, irrecoverable, unpardonable state. By what has been said it appears that no one now has reason to do this; and it is certainly the greatest design of the Gospel and our Saviour's coming into the World, to persuade Mankind that were sunk into the saddest Sins and Wickedness, to Repent and

Forſake all their Evil ways: And there is no ſuch means to encourage to this, as to aſſure them of the Divine Mercy, and the certain Forgiveness of all of them if they do. 'Tis this is the way to bring Men in to their Duty and Allegiance, when their Governour proclaims an univerſal Act of Grace for what is paſt; whereas the being cut off from all ſuch hopes, makes them go on, and grow more deſperate; and 'tis by this Goodneſs and Mercy of God, held forth to all Sinners, and ſo fully diſplayed in the Goſpel and the Death of Chriſt, that we are led to Repentance, and therefore it ought by no means to be leſſened or diminifhed unleſs we would make God leſs Good than he is, and hinder Men from ever becoming better.

(2.) Let us take care to avoid all manner of wilful Sin, and eſpecially all thoſe great ones that come near and any way approach to this Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt. A very wilful Sin, in a Chriſtian eſpecially, is in ſome ſenſe a Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt; 'tis a *grieving, a quenching, and a reſiſting the Spirit*, in the language of Holy Scripture. That Bleſſed Spirit is concerned as the great promoter of Vertue and Goodneſs in the World, and as the great Principle of it in the Hearts of Men, and whenever we do any wicked thing we offer violence to that, and by our rude and vicious carriage we affront, and grieve, and at laſt baniſh and drive away that Bleſſed Gueſt out of our Souls. Whatever is Wicked and Sinful is ſo contrary to his Pure and Excellent Nature, that it is highly offensive to him; and

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of REPENTANCE. 181

if we go on in a course of long and customary Wickedness, we sin the more against him, and come the nearer to that sad and wretched state that is unpardonable. I do not think indeed that any one Sin, or particular Act of any Sin whatever puts us into that condition; but as every Sickness and Indisposition of Body is a tendency to Death and Mortality, so every wilful Sin is a corruption of the Mind, and an approach to a state of Spiritual Death. And there are some Sins that bring this sooner upon us, as the acting against our Consciences, and the sense of our own Minds, an opposing the Truth that is evident to us, a scoffing at Religion and making a mock of Sin, an abusing the Scriptures and ridiculing the Holy Word of God, an obstinate resistance of all the motions of God's Holy Spirit upon our Minds. These and such like gross and obstinate impieties, though I do not think they are any of them the very Sin against the Holy Ghost, for that ought not to be extended further than we have a warrant from Scripture, yet they are so many approaches as it were to it, and have more of the ill symptoms of that upon them, and therefore we ought especially to avoid them lest they bring us by degrees into that sad state which is unpardonable; for though one Sin, I believe, do not do this, yet a great many may, and especially such as those which do so waste the Conscience, and corrupt the Mind as to make it incurable. And this is the saddest State and Condition in the World, next to the state of Hell and Damnation, tho'

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it be not the immediate Sin against the Holy Ghost.

Having endeavoured to give the plainest and fullest satisfaction I can to the most doubtful and scrupulous Minds about this Sin of the Holy Ghost, I shall now Discourse of some other things of a Lesser Nature, which many Penitents and good Men are apt to be greatly dissatisfied with, and have dark and wrong thoughts about. As,

- I. Concupiscence, the Lustings of the Flesh, or struggle between that and the Spirit, which they find in themselves.
- II. Trouble of Mind, and a wounded Spirit, which many lye under by reason of their Sins, or by reason of Melancholly, or both together.

S E C T. III.

Of Concupiscence, the Lustings of the Flesh, or struggle between that and the Spirit.

THE right understanding of our selves is very necessary to the right understanding of Religion. Religion is fitted and adapted to Human Nature in its present state and capacity in this World, and is designed not to destroy it, but to perfect and improve it, and raise it to its true Happiness and Perfection. We cannot be like the Angels in Heaven, nor like Pure and Glorious Spirits whilst we live here upon

upon Earth, and have Bodies of Flesh and Blood united to our Souls. God who made us, and knows our Frame, did not intend to destroy and undo his own Creation by the Precepts of Religion, nor make us cease to be Men by becoming Christians. We find indeed in our selves a great many Weaknesses and Corruptions, strong Passions and sensual Inclinations, which if we did not wisely govern would be great occasions of Sin to us, and if we let them loose, would carry us into a thousand Mischiefs as well as Sins and Wickednesses. They who give the Reins to those, and the full swinge to their Natural Lusts and Passions run into all Vice and Debauchery, *and commit all uncleanness with greediness.* And the best of Men cannot be wholly free from that Original Concupiscence, and those Sensual Motions and Desires that are not always agreeable to Reason and Religion ; but they complain of this *bondage of corruption*, and this *body of death*, which they cannot be delivered from, *Rom. 8. 21. and 7. 24.* Grace and Religion, though it gives us another Principle, and conveys new powers of a Divine and Spiritual Life into our Souls, yet whilst the Animal and Sensual Life remains, and whilst we are compounded of Flesh and Blood as well as Spirit and Reason, and have a Carnal as well as Spiritual Principle in us, there will be a mighty struggle and a great contest between those two, and a kind of civil War in our Breasts between those different Parties, and which of those shall be uppermost, and have the chief

Power, and gain the Victory, is the great point, and the great concern of all Vertue and Religion; since in all of us, as the Apostle says, *The Flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the Flesh, and these are contrary one to the other, so that we cannot do the things that we would, Gal. 5. 17.* And this we know by Experience as well as by Revelation. Now this Concupiscence that remaineth in good Men is often matter of great trouble to them, and they know not what to judge of it, or how far it is a Sin and ought to be Repented of, and what way they may best overcome it. I shall therefore to clear and satisfie their thoughts about this matter of the struggle or lusting between the Flesh and Spirit, shew these three things.

First, That mere Lusting on either side is not what makes either Sin or Vertue, or denominates a bad or a good Man.

Secondly, That these are the proper matter of Vice or Vertue, in which the tryal and exercise of them lye.

Thirdly, That we ought to lessen the Power of the Fleshly Lusting, and increase that of the Spirit, and what are the proper means to do this, I shall briefly consider.

First, That meer Lusting on either side is not what makes either Sin or Vertue, nor what constitutes or denominates a Bad or a Good Man: For this Lusting is in both good and bad, though according to several degrees and measures;

sures ; in the one the Lustings of the Flesh prevail, and in the other that of the Spirit, and 'tis from this, the prevalency of either of these, and not the meer contention of them, that we are counted good or bad before God. The best of Men may have the same Passions, Appetites, and Bodily Inclinations with others, and may be disposed thereby to such Lustings and Desires of the Flesh, but they do not let those carry them to unlawful Practices, to undue Objects, to consent to what is sinful, or commit any thing that is forbidden by a Divine Law. The worst of Men may have some ineffectual Desires and good Motions stirred up in their Souls now and then, and it may be with some force and violence that they overcome the tender sense of their own Minds, and the strugglings and rebukes of their own Consciences, and their own Spirits and the Spirit of God may strive within them against their Lusts and sinful Inclinations, but the latter is too hard for them, and the Temptations of Sin and Wickedness prevail over all their faint Desires, good Wishes, Purposes or Resolutions. 'Tis certain no Man can be wicked but against the sense of his own Mind, the limiting of his Conscience, the convictions of his own Reason and Judgment, and a strong inward Principle, that makes Vice troublefome and uneasy to him at its first commitment, before he has worn off Natural Shame and Innocence, and is hardened by Custom, and long continuance. We have Naturally in us a Principle of Vertue as well as of Vice ; they are both indeed

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deed blended and mixt in our Nature, and therefore the Spirit does as truly Lust against the Flesh, and has strong Natural Motions against that, as the Flesh hath against the Spirit. We have the Natural Seeds of Probity, good Nature, Pity, Charity, Kindness, Modesty, and other Vertues sown in our Hearts, and appearing in the first tender indications of undisguised Nature, in Children and Infants, as well as the seeds of Vice and Wickedness, and all manner of Pravity and Corruption that grow up afterwards in Mens Lives. There is an Original Lust and Concupiscence to Good as well as to Evil; and as there is an Original Sin in our Nature, in a true sense and meaning, so there is an Original Righteousness still remaining in us, as not only Nature and Experience, but *St. Paul's* words here of the two Lustings of the Flesh and Spirit, do plainly suppose and demonstrate. But because some have thought that the first Motions of Concupiscence, or the meer feeble and ineffectual Lustings and Desires of the Flesh after Evil or undue Objects, is truly and properly a Sin, I shall clear and consider that Point, and take off the trouble that some have thereupon in their Minds.

1. These meer Lustings or first Motions of Concupiscence cannot be Sin, because they are Natural, and result from our very Frame, and Make, and Constitution; and as an Argument that they are so, and so come from pure Mechanism of Body, and the Temperament of Blood and Spirits, they are the same both in us
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and in Brutes who have such Bodies as we have, and who never were capable of Sinning or Falling, or being punish'd as such. Now nothing that is purely Natural can be Sinful, for as such it is the work of God and part of his own Creation which he has pronounced to be good, and it plainly serves such good ends and designs for the benefit of the World, as God thought necessary, and as are wisely appointed by him. 'Tis therefore making God the Author of Evil, or with the Antient Hereticks, making an Evil Principle to be our Creator, to suppose any thing in us that is purely Natural to be Sinful.

2. These Lustings and first Desires were in our first Parents before the Fall (for they are only the inclination of our Animal Nature to its proper good, and a suitable Object) when they beheld the forbidden Fruit, *and saw that it was good for food, and pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired, Gen. 3. 4.* Had they gone no further but only seen it, and thought it fair and lovely to the eye, but checked this their Desire and Lust after it with the Consideration of God's Prohibition, and of the Punishment he had threatned against the eating of it, they had not then lost their Innocence, nor broken God's Command, nor incurred the grievous Penalty of it.

3. Those Natural Desires and Inclinations were even in our Blessed Saviour, *who was in all things tempted like unto us, yet without sin, Heb. 4. 15.* Who as he increased in Wisdom and Stature, and grew up as a Man, so he hungred and thirsted, and felt pain, and was
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extremely sorrowful even unto Death, and prayed *that the bitter Cup might pass from him*; which all showed that he took our Nature with its Weaknesses and Infirmities upon him, and that those are not Sins unless they go further, and make us do something unlawful which he never did; but his Vertue would not have been so great, nor could he have been tempted by the Devil, or rewarded by his Father for his Obedience, had not he had the same Natural Desires and Inclinations that belong to Flesh and Blood.

4: These first Motions are unavoidable, and not under the power or command of our Will, any more than such sensations and perceptions from Objects suited to such Faculties and inward Powers; so that we can no more help such Motions and Desires arising from such Causes, than the seeing things when they are set before our Eyes, or having our Ears struck with such sounds as are near us. The Mind is as suddenly struck with such a Desire and Inclination from such an Object making impression upon it agreeable to its Nature and Capacity, as it is by our outward Senses. Indeed the Mind can judge of this afterwards, and has a power to determine it self as it pleases, either to choose or refuse such a Motion offered to it, and this we call Will; and if it does choose it, and consent to it, then as St. James says, *Lust hath conceived and brought forth Sin, James 1. 15.* but it is not Sin before it hath thus conceived and brought it forth; and though the Action be not yet produced, yet when the Mind has

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consented to it, from thence it derives its Sinfulness, and all its Blame and Guilt, and there wants nothing in it self but only Power and Opportunity, which are things without it, to bring it into Act: So that as a weight is the same, though its tendency downwards be stop'd by what it lyes upon, so is the pravity of the Will when it consents to an unlawful Desire, though it be hindered from executing it. But I shall show this further in the Second Head of Discourse, namely;

2ly, That these Lustings and Desires of the Flesh and the Spirit are the proper tryals of our Vertue, and the chief matter of our Obedience; and according as either of these prevail upon us, so we are fix'd in our Moral state here, and our Eternal state hereafter. The Flesh sollicitates us with the temptations of Bodily Pleasures and Delights, with the enjoyments of the Animal Life, and the sensible and present good things of this World; and if we choose those without regard to the Laws of Vertue, and Religion; if we are so fond of them that we will break through those to obtain them, and prefer the short gratifications of Sin and Flesh for a season before the better Pleasures of Verrue and Innocence, and the Glorious Rewards of them for ever; then our choice is foolish and unreasonable, and our destruction wilful and unavoidable. The Spirit proposes to us the dictates of Wisdom and Reason, and shows us both the Folly and Undecency of being thus governed by our lower
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Appetites, and being led away by those like Brutes that have no understanding, and not living up to the dignity of our Nature, and letting our Reason curb and controul those sensual inclinations : And it further lays before us the great obligations of Religion, and the strong and powerful Considerations of another World, and by all these it prevails upon all that seriously think and consider, let their Carnal Inclinations be never so strong, and the Lustings of their Flesh never so fierce and violent ; tho' their first Motions cannot be quite hindered and suppress'd, and the fire of Concupiscence cannot be quite extinguish'd and put out, yet it may be kept under and hindered from ever blazing out, from ever gaining any consent of the Will to what is unlawful, and from ever committing it by outward deed or action ; and while it does so, it is safe though it be still tryed, though it be in a state of perpetual Warfare, and the Flesh be such an intestine Enemy as cannot be wholly destroyed, but like the *Canaanites*, its Lusts may be still *a thorn in our side to vex us*, *Numb. 33.* and *to buffet us*, *2 Cor. 12. 7.* yet we may still Master and Conquer it, and keep it under, and make it subject as a Vassal to the Laws of Reason and Religion. It would be more easie, and more happy, if we brought it into a condition that it could never stir, or rebel, or rise up against the Spirit, but it may be as great Verrue, and greater Victory, and more highly rewardable to struggle and overcome ; and like *Socrates*, though by Nature and Constitution we are ne-
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ver so perverse and ill disposed, yet to become otherwise by Thought and Philosophy, and to owe our Vertue though not to our temper yet to our Care and Circumspection, to the power of Grace and Religion: *That* will change our Hearts and our Tempers, and renew us inwardly in our Minds, and instead of stony Hearts, give us Hearts of Flesh, *Ezek. 36. 26.* and instead of Fleshly and Earthly Desires give us Spiritual and Heavenly ones, and whatever we are by Nature, make us meek and gentle, sober and temperate, pure and chaste, and entirely Vertuous by Principle, Habit and Resolution. 'Tis very happy when a Natural Temper disposes us to acquire those Christian Vertues; when the Soil is kindly, and fitted for them to take root and grow up in it, but we must prepare and cultivate it, and weed out those corruptions that are in it, till we plant it with all those Graces, and it bring forth those Fruits of the Divine and Spiritual Life, though we are at never so much care and pains about them.

How we may bring the Spirit to prevail always over the Flesh, and to Conquer the Lustings of it, and by what means we may lessen the Power of one, and increase that of the other, I am in the *Third* place to consider.

i. These Lustings of the Flesh, so far as Natural, are not Sinful, but may be consistent with the contrary Principle of the Spirit when kept within due bounds, and governed by the Laws of Vertue and Religion. We cannot be without such Passions, Appetites and Inclinations whilst we have Body and Flesh about us,
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and these are part of God's Creation, and not made in vain, but put in us for good ends so far as they were designed by God and Nature. They were not given us to torment and vex us with unsatisfied Desires and impatient Appetites; like *Tantalus* his Punishment, to have the daintiest Fruit before him, and be set up to the Chin in a cool River, and yet not taste the one, nor quench his thirst with a drop of the other: No, Religion does not tie us up from any proper Natural Enjoyments with a *touch not, taste not, handle not*, but allows us the satisfying and gratifying our Natural Appetites and Desires within the bounds of Vertue, Decency and Lawfulness. It lets us eat of all the Trees, and Fruits, and Dainties of this Earthly Paradise, only it keeps us from the forbidden Fruit, and suffers us not to gratifie our Desires brutishly and unreasonably, and without regard to publick and private good, which is more to be regarded than any Mans particular humour or pleasure. God therefore, as we are Rational Creatures who are to promote the universal Happiness of the whole World, has given us such Laws as conduce to that end, and we are always to observe them, and not transgress the Limits and Prescriptions by which he has bounded our Sensual Desires and Inclinations, and without destroying them has made them useful and serviceable to the wise ends of his Providence. So that we are not bound with the *Stoicks* to root up those, nor with the *Asceticks* to deny our selves such gratifications as are Innocent and Decent, Lawful and Useful, But,

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2. We are to destroy the Excesses and Irregularities of them which are vicious, mischievous and unbecoming; and this Religion means when it bids us *mortifie our earthly members, and crucifie the Flesh, with the Affections and Lusts*; and *pluck out a right eye, and cut off a right hand when they offend us*, or draw us to Sin; not that we are to destroy hereby any part of our Nature, or any of the Passions and Inclinations resulting from it, but so far as they are unnatural and immoderate, inflamed and heightened by folly and fancy, and exceed the measures both of Nature and Reason, Virtue and Religion, and exceed the bounds both of Humane and Divine Laws, so far we are to destroy, kill and mortifie them; for they become then mischievous and pernicious to the World, and bring shameful and miserable effects along with them, and are a reproach and a dishonour to our Reason and our Nature, as being contrary to and below both. The frame and make of our Bodies require to be sustained with Meat and Drink, and the Natural Appetites of Hunger and Thirst are to be gratified with what is acceptable to the Taste and Palate, but when this runs into Luxury, Gluttony and Drunkenness, when Vanity, Brutishness and Debauchery mixes it self with our Meat and Drink, then these Natural Appetites are vicious and immoderate, forced beyond Nature by Folly, Fancy and Custom, and our Table becomes a Snare and a Sin to us. We cannot but desire the good things, the conveniences, the plenty, the Riches of this World, for we see the
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usefulness

usefulness and the necessity of them to our present Life, but to desire them so immoderately, as not to be content with a moderate competency and sufficiency, with *food and rayment*, as the Apostle has fix'd a competency, 1 *Tim.* 6. 8. with what answers the wants of Nature and the circumstances of our Condition, but to be always craving after more without any use or occasion, this is that immoderate desire of Riches which we call Covetousness; and so in other things 'tis the Excess, the Irregularity, the immoderate and the vicious Abuse, not the Natural Passion and Inclination it self that is to be denyed, restrained and mortified.

3. To do this we must so check, and restrain, and deny even our Natural Appetites that we may have the Power and Government always over them: Now if we let them loose, and lay the reins upon their neck, and let them take their utmost liberties, and go always to the furthest bounds of what is lawful, they will hardly be kept in as they ought to be, but we shall walk upon the brink of danger and the side of a precipice, where it will be hard to escape falling sometimes; and our Sensual Inclinations will grow more heady, strong and ungovernable by being always indulged, and not used to a more severe discipline and management, which all wise Men have therefore prescribed by the Rules and Precepts of Mortification and Self-denial.

4. To abate these Lustings and Desires of the Flesh, and increase and raise those of the

the Spirit, let us consider how little and mean are the objects and gratifications of the one in respect of those of the other. How the one are low, sordid and Brutish, the other Rational and Angelical, such as the highest order of Beings next to God are capable of. How little is there in all the Riches, and Greatness, and State of this World, how much less in all the mad frolicks of Debauchery, and all the beastliness and filthiness of Brutish Lusts, in all those things that make up Carnal Enjoyments, and are the sum, as the Apostle reckons them up, of all that is in the World, *The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life,* 1 John 2. 16. How much greater and nobler is it to have a wise, and sober, and vertuous Mind, easie Thoughts, and a chearful Conscience, Spiritual Desires and Affections set upon things above, and strong and well-grounded hopes of an Eternal Life and a Glorious Immortality: These are the Objects of our Spiritual Desires, and we should increase those by representing the worth and value, the greatness and excellency of these above any other things that we can choose or desire, or any enjoyments of the Animal and Sensual Life. 'Tis a vain fancy and opinion of the latter, whereby we raise our imagination and heighten our expectation of something great and extraordinary in them; 'tis that kindles our Affections, and inflames our Desires after them; but did we wisely consider how vain, and trifling, and

inconsiderable they are, and how poor, and little, and short, and sorry gratifications they afford, this would wean us from such weak fancies and opinions of them, and so slack and cool our Desires and Lustings after them.

Lastly, We must use all Religious Means and Methods to mortifie and abate the Lustings of the Flesh, and strengthen and increase those of the Spirit by the Acts and Exercises of Religion, Piety and Devotion. 'Tis in the growth and prevalence of the latter lyes our Moral State, and the greatest exercise of all Vertue, and in the right ordering and governing of our Passions Appetites and Inclinations, so that we must use all possible Methods to keep the lower Appetites under, and obedient to the superiour, and not let them dethrone our Reason, or disobey Religion; and therefore we must use all the helps we can have from Religion and Philosophy, and the Divine Grace and Assistance, to tame our inordinate Lusts by Fasting, by Watching, by Prayer, by due watchfulness and circumspection over our selves, and over all the weak places of our Nature, that Sin do not enter in at some of those inlets that are unguarded, and do not surprize and easily beset us when we are unprepared and unarmed by Religion against the assaults of it; and there is nothing so helpful to this, and to increase and strengthen our Spiritual Desires so that they shall always prevail over the Lusts of the Flesh, as the constant and uninterrupted exercises of Piety and Devotion: These give
life,

life, and vigour, and nourishment to our Spiritual Desires, and keep them always warm, and heated, and intent upon their proper Objects, whereas a neglect of those begets a carelessness, stupidity and senselessness of all those things, and sinks Men into a meer Sensual, and Animal, and Worldly, and Brutal Life. Nothing is therefore so proper to bring us to these Spiritual Desires, and to make those always prevail over the Lusts of the Flesh, as Devotion and Piety, which raise the Mind to things above the Body, and above this World, and take off and abstract the Soul from Sensual and Carnal Enjoyments, and make it live up as near as it can to that Life it shall have in Heaven, when it shall be all Spirit, and have no Flesh or Lusts to contend with, or be contrary to it.

I shall in the next place consider another thing which befalls many a Sinner, and which, tho' a due effect of his Sins, and an evidence of the sad state they bring him to, and so may be of great use to be duly considered on this account, yet is a kind of Excess of Repentance, and sometimes too great an extream that way, and what ought to have the nicest Resolutions, and best Directions given about it to cure and remove it; I mean, Trouble of Mind, or a Wounded Conscience, which many a Sinner lyes under, and which I shall briefly Represent and Discourse of, by considering how great a Misery it is above all others in this World, and what Cure and Remedy there may be for it, or for those who are fallen under it.

S E C T. IV.

Of Trouble of Mind, or a Wounded Spirit.

TH E greatest part of our Happiness or Misery lyes in our Minds and Spirits, in those inward Faculties and Sensories which are distinct from our Body and outward Senses. We feel very often more pleasure or pain in those distinct from the Body than the Body it self is capable of; for these are quicker and more sensible than Matter and Body can be, and are the proper subject of perception of any Pleasure and Pain, and of all Rational Happiness or Misery. A Man's inward Thoughts do often give him more torment and uneasiness, anguish and disquietude of Soul, and more real pain and misery than any Bodily torment, or even Death it self; and therefore some have chosen Death, and have willingly endured any Bodily pain rather than lye under the greater pain, agonies and horrors of their own Minds; and many that have been under those, yet have felt an inward joy comfort and satisfaction of Mind that has supported them under the worst pains and sufferings of Body, and the greatest outward evils that could ever fall upon them, and their Minds and Spirits have been chearful and erect and despised the threatenings of Tyrants, and born the greatest tortures of Body, and the hardest calamities of this World. Thus did all the Martyrs, and thus do many good Men and good Christians enjoy an inward happiness of Mind, a peace,
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and comfort, and delight of Conscience under a painful and sickly Body, a poor and necessitous Condition, and under a great many outward Evils which they are here subject to; but there are some closer and more inward Evils felt by others, a guilty and uneasy Mind, a troubled and disquiet Conscience, a scaring dread of a Divine Vengeance hanging over their heads, and a fearful expectation and looking for of Judgment, which shall devour them in a little time; *these* are such dreadful Evils as sink down a Man's Mind, and oppress it with an insupportable burden greater than it can bear, and swallow it up in a gulph of unspeakable and intolerable Misery. This is the greatest and the worst of Miseries, to which no other Misery nor no other Evils here that we are subject to are comparable: As the Wise Man observes, *Prov. 11. 14. The spirit of a man may sustain his infirmities, but a wounded spirit who can bear?* I shall consider three things relating to such a Wounded Spirit or Troubled Mind.

- I. How little all other Evils are in respect of this.
- II. How dreadful and insupportable that is.
- III. What is the proper Cure or Remedy for it.

I. All Worldly Evil, or all that we can call outward Misery to a Christian, is in respect of that but like a small Wound to a sound Body, a little scratch upon the Skin, which

though it may pain a Man a little, and be something uneasie, yet may be well enough born, and will heal of it self, or by the help of proper Remedies, so long as it touches not the Vitals, nor comes near the great Vessels of Life; but inward Misery, the pain and anguish of a Man's own Mind caused by his Sins and an evil Conscience, is like a dart struck through his Liver, like a sword piercing into his Bowels or his very Heart, like a prick upon a Nerve or the most tender and vital part of us, which puts us into Convulsions and Agonies, and scatters all the force and power of our Animal Spirits. When any outward Affliction falls upon a good Man, he has something to support himself, *His heart standeth firm, or is fixed, trusting in the Lord, Psal. 112. 7.* He has inward springs of Comfort rising up in his Mind that supply it with fresh vigours, and overflow and refresh it with constant recruits. Under the greatest losses and disappointments here, he is sure he cannot lose Heaven if he take care to live well, nor be disappointed of his expectations hereafter: and that at present he has a good Providence that will not leave him destitute or unprovided, but do what is best for him. Under the greatest Calumny and Slander that others may load him withal, which is as uneasie as any thing to an ingenuous Mind; yet when a Man's Conscience acquits and vindicates him, though all the World should reproach and accuse him, he has more peace from thence than disturbance from all the noise and clamours of theirs. Under the greatest
Sickness

Sickness or the Fears of Death, when that most terrible thing comes near him and stands before him, though he may not be wholly without fear, yet he is not without hopes and comfort too; but now what shall a wicked Man do under all these, when his Mind is sick as well as his Body, when Death scares him, and comes as he thinks, to torment him before his time, when he is afraid to dye, and yet thinks he must dye whenever he is a little ill, how often does such an one dye? how often does he taste the bitterness of Death? and how does he feel something in his Mind worse than Death to his Body, and the agonies of his Conscience are the foretaste of that second and Eternal Death.

This shews how dreadful and unsupportable a Wounded Spirit is, which is the second thing I was to consider: But I have prevented my self in some measure with what I have said already, and I dare not undertake fully to describe that which they who have felt, tell us it is impossible to represent, or give account of: What horrors they have been in, what dismal terrours they have layn under, how they have suffered, as they imagine, the very torments of Hell, so great have the torments been above any thing else they could ever conceive or have an Idea of: So that I take this to be a sensible proof and demonstration of a Hell; and if a Fiend had come from thence, and with the ghastliest look and the frightfullest appearance had told us what he felt there, it could not have been
more

more convincing nor more affecting than what an old and despairing Sinner has both felt and confessed before he came thither; when God has made him preach this without rising from the dead; to warn his Brethren from the like Sins, and if it were possible to make them Repent, and not come into that state of Torments, when without going to the other World, or having a Messenger come from thence, they have seen and heard him cry out in the anguish of his Soul, like Cain, *that his sins and his Punishment is greater than he can bear*, Gen. 4. 13. *When the wrath of God has layn heavy upon him, and the arrows of the Almighty have stuck fast in him, and he has been forced to drink of the wrath of the Almighty*, as Job expresses it, Job 21. 20. Or as the Psalmist more fully, when he tells us, Psal. 75. 8. *In the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the Wine is red: it is full of mixture, and he poureth out of the same: the dregs whereof the wicked shall wring out, and drink of them.* This bitter Cup of God's Wrath mixed with all the poysonous extracts of his own Sins, the wicked has been forced to drink, and has found that these are not vain and empty words, but real and sensible things, that we want proper words to express; for all the terrible Idea's and representations come very short of the things themselves; to be whip'd with Snakes, and lash'd with Scorpions; to have hot burning Torches and flaming Swords held and applyed to us, which were the Metaphorical descriptions of these tortures of Conscience, are

are far short of what they are in themselves ; and nothing indeed can come nigh the sense of them , nor is what we feel in pain or pleasure to be ever drawn fully and to the life in picture.

When a Man feels something in himself that nothing else is like ; when his Soul is overwhelmed with the deep Passions of remorse, anguish and despair ; when God hides his Face and takes away all Comfort from him ; when he has no more hopes of Mercy, and judges himself as incapable of it as the damned in Hell ; when God's Spirit has left him, so that he can neither pray nor do any thing to relieve himself, but lyes as a condemned Caitiff, a Malefactor sentenced, past all hopes of Pardon, and only expecting Punishment, and the last stroke of Vengeance, this is a sad, a deplorable Condition which I have known many a Sinner in under a Wounded Spirit, and had one great Instance before me when I was writing this.

These Wounds are not felt indeed by many a Sinner in the Heat of Blood, in the career of his Lusts, and the hot pursuit of his Sins ; when in his high frolicks and jovial diversions he drowns the noise of his Conscience, or lulls it asleep with charming Pleasures, or full Cups, or some unthinking madness ; but it will awake one time, or other, and like a sleeping Lyon when 'tis roused up by some Judgment, by some Sickness, or Affliction, it will fall terribly upon him with rage and fury, and tear and consume him, then all the Wounds which sin gave it will bleed afresh,

afresh, and it will feel them afterwards, unless they have been cured by a timely repentance; if they have festered, and gangrened, and mortified the Soul for a time, yet when it comes to it self it will feel them with unexpressible pain and anguish, which nothing can assuage. I mean when a Man has sin'd away his Life, and Death and his Sins are set together before him, and 'tis hard to know which is the more terrible. When the Sting of Death swelled up with Sin and Guilt strikes as deep into a Man's Conscience, and wounds his Spirit, as Death it self strikes into his Body with its fatal dart, so that he suffers a double death at the same time, and the Spiritual far more painful than the Bodily. I take a Wounded Spirit here in the highest and most common sense; and though when a Man's Spirit is dejected and sunk with any thing 'tis very hard to bear it, which may be the sense of the Wise Man's words in the forequoted place, when the strength of a Man's Mind is lost which should support him under all his infirmities that he is subject to from without, yet nothing does so sink it, so wound and destroy it as Sin and Guilt, especially when it is come to such a degree, and to such a sad condition as we commonly mean by a Wounded Spirit; i. e. a Mind deeply pierced with the sense of its own Guilt, and of God's Anger upon it. This likewise admits of degrees, and in some cases 'tis a very happy thing for a Sinner, and 'tis to be sure always a just Punishment.

I shall therefore in the Third place briefly consider what is the proper Cure and Remedy of such a wounded Spirit or troubled Mind, for there is no Spiritual Illness but what is curable if we take it in time, by Religion; no Wound of Soul but what there is Balm for in *Gilead*, in Christianity; there is no Disease too great for our Heavenly Physician, but what the Gospel has a proper and certain Remedy for, if we duly and timely apply it. A Man may tarry too long indeed, and not use the Physick till it be too late, till Death comes and puts an end to the time of Tryal, and the time of Repentance; and then a Wounded Spirit, *i. e.* the extremest Sorrow for a Man's Sins, the deepest Contrition of Soul for them, cannot come up to true Gospel Repentance to which there is a certain Promise of Pardon and Forgiveness, for that is only upon turning to God, and leaving all our Sins, and leading a new Life, and bringing forth the Fruits of Repentance by Obedience to the Gospel for the future, which is a necessary condition by the terms of the Gospel which he cannot perform whom God cuts off before he can do it; and therefore such an one must be left to the Infinite Mercy and Righteous Judgment of God, to be dealt with by such measures as are not within the the Covenant of Grace, or the Terms of the Gospel, for by those I cannot see any title he has to Pardon: But in other Cases a Wounded Spirit may be the greatest Mercy, and even the very beginning of Health, or of a Cure to a Soul

Soul, when God does not suffer a Man to go on senselessly in his Sins, till he come to a seered Conscience, and a reprobate Sense, and to hardness of Heart and blindness of Mind, but by some methods of his Grace and Providence alarms his Conscience and awakens his stupid Mind, and brings his almost senseless and stupified Soul to some Spiritual sense of his condition. Then his Soul will be wounded as *David's* was when he reflects upon those Sins which he committed without consideration, and he will be sore struck and smitten as every Penitent must, at the remembrance of his evil ways. All Repentance is such a wounding of the Soul as makes its Heart bleed within it, and its Blood and Spirits melt into Tears and Sorrow for what it has done; 'tis not such an easie thing as most men think it to be; 'tis such a Pain, such a Wound to the Soul, that the Pleasure of the greatest Sin is but a poor trifle to it, and no man that rightly understood it would venture upon any Sin from the reserved hopes of it. Repentance is a bitter Remedy made up of very strong and unpleasant ingredients, and we must go through a long course to purge out the old Disease and take away the root of it: so that before a wicked mind can be cured by it, it must be cut and lanced, and wounded, and have very severe applications made to it. The work of Regeneration or the New Birth cannot be wrought without many pangs or throws, nor does God ever almost bring a bad man to become a good one without some trouble

trouble and disorder of Mind. There is a trouble of Mind indeed which is excessive and unreasonable, for every Sinner ought in some measure to be troubled in Mind, and he has not a due sense of his Sins if he is not ; but there is a trouble of Mind which takes away the hopes of Mercy and throws Men into despair, which is commonly called a Wounded Spirit, and 'tis so in the highest degree ; and whether there is any Remedy for that, and what it is, and what advice is to be given in such a case, and what judgment to be made of it, I shall briefly consider.

1. Then this is often joyned with Melancholy of Body which is very hard to be cured, and till it be so it is apt to darken the Mind, and bring a cloud over the Spirits, and to fill the Soul with very black Idea's and Imaginations, and to hinder it from making true judgment of it self or its own actions ; and this is as pityable, and ought as much to be remedied by Physick and Care, as other Diseases of Body, for I have known very good Persons subject to it ; and one of the best means to cure it is to know that this is one cause of that trouble of Mind, which will be so much abated when one is persuaded from whence it often comes, or is hightened : For Melancholy is not curable by Religion or Divinity, and they who are subject to it should take the more care of their lives that there be no true and great cause to fall in and joyn with the Melancholy of their Bodies, and they should make a judgment of themselves in their best tempers, and when their thoughts are clearest,
and

and should trust others, and especially their Spiritual Guides to judge for them, since they are so unfit generally to pass judgment upon themselves.

2. This Trouble of Mind which makes Men despair of Mercy, is most unreasonable, and contrary to the whole tenour and design of the Gospel; for there is Pardon held out to the greatest Sinner by the Blood of Christ, and to the greatest Sin, or the greatest number of Sins if we Repent of them, and leave them, and become good Men before we dye. This is as certain as the Gospel is true, and therefore no Man has any just cause to despair for the greatest Sin or Sins, who is so heartily troubled for them that he would not for the World commit them again, and who resolves never to do so by the Grace of God, but to practise the contrary Vertues, and who makes good this Resolution by a Vertuous, and Pious, and Religious Life, this Man will as certainly be happy as if he had been always innocent and never had offended God: I cannot say he will be in a state as comfortable and free from trouble, though if he has thus Repented and become a good man, he has good reason to be so; but he will be as safe, and if he has still some trouble of mind remaining upon the remembrance of his Sins though never so long past, and he cannot see the Pardon of them with the same certainty and evidence that he knows he committed them, yet this shall not hinder his Pardon nor affect his Salvation if he has truly and fully Repented of them. For,

3. And Lastly, This Trouble of Mind which

which proceeds from judging too hardly or severely of himself is rather an Infirmary than a Sin, and God will not condemn a Man for it though he may condemn himself; for God will not condemn a Man unjustly though he should unjustly condemn himself, much less because he does so. Despair is indeed a sad state, but I cannot say it is always a damnable Sin, or want of Faith as some think, for it may arise not from a disbelief of the Gospel, or of the Divine Goodness, or the freeness and fulness of God's Grace in and through Christ, but meerly from a false, and mistaken, and too hard and humble an opinion of a Man's self, and this is a fault not of a Man's Will but of his Judgment, and a weakness and imperfection in his Understanding, for which he shall never be condemn'd by a Righteous God, but he will reverse this false Judgment which he made of himself when he lived or when he dyed, and set it right in the Court of Heaven, and do Justice to him at the great Tribunal, though he did not do it to himself here. That God will judge Men according to their Works is plain in Scripture, but no where that I know, that he will do so according to their Thoughts, their vain Hopes, and presumptuous or vain Fears, and Troubles, and Doubts, and even Despairs of themselves. So that tho' this Trouble of Mind or this Wounded Spirit be a comfortless and unhappy state, yet it truly depends upon the cause to make judgment of it, or to conclude any thing from it, and true and timely Repentance is the best and certainest Remedy for it.

C H A P. IV.

The ill Consequences drawn from the Privilege of Repentance Obviated and Prevented.

TH E most wicked and greatest of Sinners, who have any thoughts of their Souls and of another World, though they are not prevailed upon by this to become better, yet make this reserve and refuge to themselves, that they will Repent hereafter at some time or other, and so escape the Wrath to come, They know and are very sensible, if they have not shaken off all Religion, and all thinking and considering of these things, *that except they repent they shall all perish*; but they hope and intend to prevent this by the Benefit of Repentance, and so make use of that not to bring them off from their Sins, but to encourage them in them, with hopes to avoid all the miserable consequences of them and yet live in them, and so by this privilege of an after Repentance they set aside the present necessity of a good Life, and wholly destroy or supersede all Religion.

I shall therefore endeavour to prevent that most common and most fatal abuse of it; for I am confident there are more Souls perish by that, than by any other mistake whatsoever, and a thousand times more than by down-right Infidelity and Disbelief of all Religion

Religion, which is a very rare thing, and 'tis hard to find out any certain instances that have ever been of it in the World 'tis so much against the Natural Sense and Reason, and Apprehension of Mankind, but the other is the commonest thing in the World even for Christians perhaps above any others, to make false Reasonings to themselves from this privilege of Repentance which we have in the highest degree from the Gospel, to think they may secure and save their Souls, and yet indulge and allow themselves in the present enjoyment of their Sins, because they may set all right by Repenting of them hereafter. I shall therefore against this error and abuse of Repentance, and to obviate this mischievous Consequence offer these following Considerations.

1. Can we think a Wise God would make such a Grant and Concession to his Creatures as should destroy all Religion, and make void the necessity of Obedience and a good Life? which according to these Mens thoughts is unavoidably done by this Gospel-privilege of Repentance? For since, say they, a Man is as certainly safe who comes in at any time upon Repentance, and shall be certainly saved by the Terms and Conditions of the Gospel as if he had spent all his Life in the strictest Vertue and Religion, What need is there of such an early, and constant, and perpetual Obedience, and spending a whole Life in the servitude and drudgery of Religion, when coming in at the eleventh hour, and working but a short

space at the latter end of the day, will have as much Wages, and as sure a Reward, and be as certainly accepted by God? Shall not a Sinner when ever he returns and repents find Mercy? Is there any time or bounds prefix'd to his Repentance, so that he may not do it so many years hence as well as at present; and after he has taken a great deal of liberty, and had the full swinge of his Lusts and vicious Inclinations, when they afterward grow calm and cool of themselves, and he is tired or satiated with them, then to leave them after he has had a full and a long enjoyment of them: To Repent time enough to avoid all the bitter effects and punishments of them, after they have fully tasted and exhausted all their sweetness and pleasantness, and then throw away the poysonous core when they have sufficiently eaten of the dainty and forbidden Fruit. Men to be sure will draw such consequences to themselves, when Religion they think puts such an Argument into the hands of their Lusts which are apt to be too strong of themselves against all Religion and Reason whatsoever, and when they have such a fair colour and pretence as they suppose from Religion it self, they will be sure to improve it to destroy all Religion by this one part of it, and by turning its own weapons upon it self: so that like the Eagle in the Fable it shall receive its mortal wound from a dart that comes feathered from its own wing, and by this subtile contrivance it shall be made to countermine it self. Is Heaven then to be thus out-witted and over-reach'd in its own Policy? and
whereas

whereas it designed this Privilege of Repentance to bring Men to Vertue, shall the Devil find out a stratagem whereby to be too hard for it even upon it's own ground, and make it an instrument to encourage Men in their Sins? Has God like a Soft, and easie, and indiscreet Prince granted such a Charter, and made such Concessions to his Subjects as shall destroy his own Power and Government, and make their Obedience loose and precarious? No sure, neither his Wisdom nor his Power is to be thus lessened and diminished; nor is the Grace of God, the greatest favour of the Gospel to be thus turned into wantonness, and a principle of looseness and licentiousness, as these Men make it who thus presume upon Sinning at present upon the advantage of an after Repentance, and resolve therefore to run on in the score, and to take up great summs in hand, and be much in debt to Heaven, because they think the whole may be compounded at the last, and made up for a very little. We may be sure in the general there must be some great error and mistake in this matter, and that 'tis either a false Principle that these Men go upon, or that they draw a very false Conclusion from it; for God must be a very easie Being, and Religion must have a very *weak place* in it if it lye open to such a consequence.

2. We comonly tell Men in the second place therefore to prevent this that the after Repentance is very hazardous and uncertain, for no Man knows that he shall have time to do it hereafter, or that he shall not be surprized with a sudden and unexpected Death before he has

performed this Repentance he design'd, and this indeed is very considerable; and were there nothing else, yet a wise man would not venture his Soul and its Eternal State upon so great an uncertainty as Life and Futurity is, for that we know is no more in our own power to command, than it is to recall the time that is past, and who that thinks and considers what Eternity means would hazard it upon so ticklish a cast and so perfect a lottery as the continuance of Life is. Do not we see most of the World snatch'd away on a sudden, Death hardly giving them any warning, but coming upon them with secret and undiscerned steps, and stealing up to them and striking the fatal blow before they were aware of it; and what shall this poor Wretch do whose Life is *done* before his Repentance is *begun*? He who intended so many years hence to begin his Repentance, shall begin it sooner in another World, but shall never end it, but Repent in vain to all Eternity, in *weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth* for his folly and madness in not Repenting sooner.

But though this be a monstrous hazard and no Man in his Wits would lye open to such a danger which can never be repaired but may be easily prevented, yet this uncertainty of Life seems not a sufficient security to Religion, because 'tis a security only by accident, and it is in great measure lost if a Man do live out the usual period which many do, and which most hope to do; and there ought to be greater Reasons to oblige them to a present Repentance and a constant Obedience, than the meer fears

fears that they may dye sooner; and it would be strange if Religion should depend upon such an uncertainty, and a Man should find a way to free himself from the necessity of it the greatest part of his Life if he were sure to live long.

3. Therefore we strengthen this commonly with another Consideration, and that is, That though a Man may have Time to Repent hereafter, yet God may not give him Grace to do it, especially if he so provoke him by such a neglect and abuse of this Grace as quite defeats the end and design of it, and nothing can be more highly provoking and a more just ground for God to deny us his Spirit, than thus to abuse and pervert this Grace of the Gospel as to make it an encouragement not to Repent, but to Sin because they may Repent. Besides, the longer the Custom and Habits of Sin continue upon us, the more root they take and the more difficult are they to be pluck'd up; and the Mind is in time so much hardened by them, that like a chronical Disease or an old Ulcer, by being suffered to run long upon it, they grow almost incurable: And he must be in a sad condition who lets the power of his Sins thus grow upon him, and yet who finds them so difficult at present to be overcome, and who has that power daily lessened if not lost whereby he should do it. But still though God's Spirit shall not always strive with man, Gen. 5. 3. yet we cannot positively determine to what degrees of wickedness a Man must arrive before God will wholly withdraw his Spirit from him; nor can we say

that God denies necessary Grace to any whereby they may Repent so long as they are in this state of Tryal and Probation, or that there are any such, though the greatest of Sinners, who are debarred or excluded from the power and privilege of Repentance; for this would tend to discourage a great many from Repentance, and do as much harm by shutting those out of all hopes, as by opening the gate too wide to others, or letting it always stand open to any that will come in at any time.

There must be therefore some other Considerations to take off the force of this mistake, and to preserve the absolute necessity of a good Life and a constant Obedience, which I shall endeavour to find out and offer.

4. Then, Such a Repentance as the Gospel makes the condition of Pardon and Salvation, is nothing less than a constant Obedience and an entire and universal Goodness of Life, at least after a wicked one, or after great failures and miscarriages; for Repentance, as I have often said, is to the Soul like a recovery of Health to the Body after some great Sickness or Illness. The whole Body, or the part ill affected must be made perfectly well and restored to its former strength and soundness, or else it cannot be said to be recovered. The Disease must be thoroughly got off, the sickly matter must be discharged, the Illness must be cured and removed, and the Patient must get his former strength, and be able to perform the proper and vital operations, or else we cannot say he is well. So a Sinner must wholly get rid of his past Sins, must purge them all out by Sorrow and Contrition, must have his
Mind

Mind wholly freed from them, and himself brought to such a Spiritual strength and soundness as to perform the Duties and Operations of the new Life, or else he is not recovered by repentance, nor brought from a bad state to a good one. He may be under a method of Cure indeed, as a sick Man is under a course of Physick, whilst he is under Sorrow for Sin, and Contrition, and Compunction, and the like, which are good means and instruments, and beginnings of Repentance, and so are mistaken for the thing it self; but his Repentance is not finish'd, nor is the great work perfect and compleat, till from a bad Man in any kind he is become a good one; till this is done, which God knows, is not the most easie or the most speedy thing in the World, but requires long time, and great care and pains, and labour, there is no Title that I know of to Pardon by the Terms of the Gospel, nor is there any true Gospel Repentance, such as we can give any warrant or assurance of remission to by the Covenant of Grace, or the known and ordinary Rules of God's Mercy. Were Repentance only a sudden Passion, or a transient Act of the Mind, were it only an inward Sorrow, Trouble and Compunction of Heart, it might be quickly performed, and no Sinner would be without it; but *Cain*, and *Herod*, and *Judas* might be said to Repent thus far, and after this fashion, for thus the *one repented and said, I have sinned*, *Matt. 27. 3, 4.* The second was exceeding sorry for what he had done, *Math. 6, 26.* And the other was so sensible of his Sin that he cryed out, *My punishment is greater then I can bear,*

bear, Gen. 4. 13. But true Repentance is only known and made to be so by an habitual and lasting change both of mind and Life, by an actual amendment and reformation, by a turning away from all our evil deeds and all our wickedness whatsoever that we have committed, and doing that which is lawful and right, which is the clearest and fullest Scripture expression that gives us the true Nature of Repentance, which includes constant and actual Obedience, and destroys these foolish and wicked reserves of securing our selves by playing an after-game of Repentance. They who design this have no sense of the true worth and excellency of Religion, but are only for making use of it for a little turn at the last, as Goal-birds learn to read meerly for the sake of their Neck-verse; for though they like their Sins much better and would always live in them, it is plain if they were left to their choice, yet they at last unwillingly bring themselves to part with them as Men throw over their Goods in a Storm for fear they should be lost and Shipwreck'd with them: Thus miserably do they mistake and misunderstand the true Nature of Repentance, which is a perfect changing the Habit and Temper, and Frame of a Man's Mind, and bringing other Thoughts and Principles and Inclinations into it, which is called in Scripture *a new Heart and a new Spirit*, and this producing an entire and permanent and universal change of the Life and Actions, and making a Man become better in every particular, and in the whole a very good Man.

5. It is observable that Repentance is all along in the Gospel made a Duty previous and antecedent to Christianity; (and what was supposed to go before Baptism, and what was necessary before-hand to fit and prepare Men to become Christians; thus they were to repent, and be baptized, *Acts 2. 38. John the Baptist* who was to prepare the way for Christianity, did it by preaching Repentance, for this reason, *Because the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand, Matth. 3. 2. i. e.* Christianity or the state of the Gospel, which is agreed by all to be there meant by the Kingdom of Heaven was now approaching; and our Blessed Saviour upon that Principle and Argument preach'd the same Duty, *ver. 17. From that time he began to preach, and to say, Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.* And the Disciples of Christ preach'd this Duty, *Mark. 6. 12.* when they were to prepare and dispose Men to receive Christ and to embrace Christianity, and when any that were adult were receiv'd into the Church and Christianity by Baptism, they were supposed to be Penitents before they were Christians. It was a Duty and a Condition always implied and required, that they Repented of their past Sins, and sincerely promised and resolved upon a new course of Life. That they who had their conversation in times past in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by Nature the children of wrath, as the Apostle speaks, *Eph. 2. 3. i. e.* in the state they were in before they were Christians, (for the Gospel considers all Mankind as in a state of

of Sin and Guilt before they are admitted into Christianity which is a state of Pardon and Salvation) that these when they were made Christians were to put off the old Man with his deeds, Col. 3. 9. i. e. all the old Habits and Acts of Sin which they were guilty of in their unchristian state, and were to put on the new Man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness, Eph. 4. 24. and they were to become new Creatures in Christ Jesus, and were therefore then said to be regenerated, and to be born again, and are represented in Scripture, as dying unto all sin in Baptism, that they should not henceforth live any longer therein, Rom. 6. 2. They are buried with Christ by baptism into his death, that like as Christ was raised from the dead, even so we also who are baptized into his death, should walk in newness of life, ver. 3. So that after Baptism we should reckon our selves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ, ver. 11. So that the body of sin is then to be put off and destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin, ver. 6. Thus though Men were considered as Sinners before their Baptism, yet they were looked upon ever after as Saints in the Scripture phrase and account, and were supposed to have repented and renounced all their Sins before they were admitted into Christianity, and that as a previous and antecedent Condition necessary to qualifie and prepare them for it, and therefore there was usually some time of tryal and probation appointed by the Primitive Church, to see whether those Candidates of Baptism were sincere

cere or no in their Promises and Pretences, and if afterwards they broke and violated those, and committed any great and notorious Sin which they had renounced in their Baptism, and was contrary to their Baptismal Covenant, they turned them out of the Church for it, and excluded them from the Benefits and Privileges of Christianity; so that they accounted not those for true Christians who were Penitents, and who stood in need of Repentance for any great Sin: And indeed he is not a Christian who does so, he is fallen off from Christianity, and has quitted and renounced his Baptismal Vow, and has forfeited the Rights of it, and has put himself out of the Christian state and the state of Grace, who is guilty of any Mortal Sin, and who is in a state of Repentance for it. Penitence was therefore always accounted by those first Christians a very terrible and dreadful thing, if we read of the cries and tears, and discipline and behaviour of the ancient Penitents, though the looseness and irreligion of latter times has made it to be thought a slight, and easie, and trivial matter; but it is plain from Scripture that it was supposed as previous and antecedent to Christianity and from the Primitive Church that it cut Men off and excluded them out of it, and that so far in the opinion of some as never to be again admitted into it. The Ancient Church at first accounted him so far from being a Christian, who was in the sad and wretched state of Penitence for any great and Mortal Sin, that it thought he deserved never

never again to be received into the Church, nor admitted into Christian Communion, *not in articulo mortis.* It was so horrid a reflection in its esteem upon Christianity, such a disgrace to the Gospel of Christ, and so unworthy the Christian Profession to have a Christian guilty of any such great Sin as Murder, Adultery, or the like, that it would never own him again that was so, nor receive him as a Christian. But,

6. Though Christianity be a permanent state of Pardon and Remission, so that this is by no means to be denied to Sins after Baptism, according to the *Novatian* Heresie which sprang out of that first severe Discipline of the Church, and which it was afterwards forced to condemn, yet 'tis a thing strange, and unknown, and unagreeable to Christianity, that men should go on in a course of renewing their Sins, and so renewing their Repentance for them as often as they think fit. This would be making Christianity run in the Popish Circle of Sin and Repent, Repent and Sin, and so dance round without any danger, provided we stop at the last at the right point. I am far from that severe Principle charged upon *Novatus* of old, and *Smalcus* of late, which allows not Repentance to any great and voluntary Sins committed after Baptism, though that were given only to the Adult and to those of full Reason and Understanding; this would be the most uncomfortable thing in the World to the best Christians, few of which could

be preserved from the danger of falling into the same

set up to themselves this narrow Ladder,
 and so go alone to Heaven by it, as *Constantine*
 said to one of the Patrons of this Doctrine.
 And I think the instance of the Incestuous
Corinthian, and the unworthy Communicants
 at *Corinth*, and many other places in the New
 Testament clearly confute it; and it makes the
 Christian Covenant so much worse than the
Jewish which had standing means of Expiation
 and Remission, that it needs no more to
 confute it: And though Baptism be not to
 be repeated, yet the benefit of it reaches
 forwards as well as to what is past, as
 Christ's Death also does, and we are parta-
 kers of Christ's Blood for the remission of
 Sins in the others Sacrament as well as this,
 without any necessity of the pretended Sa-
 crament of Penance for this purpose, as the
 Papists argue: But though the Gospel has
 given us a standing Charter of Pardon
 upon Repentance, which is not forfeited
 by every new breach and violation, yet if
 we do not accept of it, and perform the
 Condition after it has been offered and ten-
 dered to us, we may justly be debarred
 and excluded from it, and God may when
 he pleases, without any breach of Promise
 or of Covenant, cut us off from it; for he
 may take away our Lives when he will,
 and so shorten and limit the time when
 this Privilege shall expire and determine,
 and when we shall no further have any be-
 nefit of it. Like a Prince who sets out a
 Proclamation of Pardon and Indempnity to
 all Rebels that shall immediately come in,
 and

and return to their Allegiance, if they delay and refuse to do this, they forfeit all their right to it, and may be seized and executed when ever he thinks fit. Should a Government grant a General Pardon to all Offenders when ever they shall please to come in and claim it, it would destroy it self, and encourage all manner of Villany and Wickedness: And if God should grant this to all Sinners when they had stood out in rebellion against him all their Lives, that at the last moment of them they should have the full and entire benefit of it, he would unavoidably encourage them in their Sins, and relax and abate all the Obligation to his Laws, and unloose Men from the necessity of a good Life, which was very far to be sure from the design of God in granting this Privilege of Repentance. But 'tis an horrid abuse of it, and a turning this *Grace of God into wantonness*, and putting a trick upon God and Religion by thus perverting it, and drawing such mischievous consequences from it. I hope I have taken away the very Grounds of that fatal Mistake, and the common and false Reasonings that many make to themselves from it, or at least shall do so before I have done, and particularly by the next Chapter.

CHAP. V.

Of a Death-Bed Repentance.

SECT. I.

*The Case of the Thief upon the Cross
Examined.*

THE Relation and Account of the Thief upon the Cross, and our Saviour's Discourse with him, tho' it be put in, and lye in the Gospel only as a meer History, and a matter of fact that belonged to the manner of our Saviour's dying, his being crucified between Two Thieves, so that it was not intended or designed by any of the Evangelists to teach any Evangelical Doctrine, or to give any peculiar Rule, Principle, or Instruction that was extraordinary, and that was to be learnt and collected, confirmed and authorized only by that, and therefore though 'tis mentioned by all the Evangelists, yet by Three of them very shortly and briefly, as a meer circumstance remarkable, chiefly for this, that the Legs of the Two Thieves were broken, as was usual in crucifixions; whereas Christ being sooner dead, prevented this, and so literally com-
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pleated

pleated that Prophecy, *A bone of him shall not be broken*: And for the sake of another Prophecy, That *he should be numbred with transgressors*, and be a Companion and fellow-Sufferer with the most infamous Criminals, and Malefactors, and nothing farther was intended or designed by it, so far as we know, or appears to us from Scripture, as the proper use, and the genuine purpose of it, though by accident indeed it was an honourable Confession of Christ, and a bearing Testimony to him before his Crucifiers, and also an Owning a future state of Bliss and Happiness after this Life, when a Man was going out of the World, by his desiring Christ *to remember him in his kingdom*, and Christ's promising, that *he should be that day with him in Paradise*; but these were Truths not to be learnt from hence only, but elsewhere, tho' they were hereby very solemnly attested to: But there has been a Doctrine raised from hence, and not to be learnt from any other place of Scripture, never taught by Christ, or any of his Apostles, but wholly taken up, and founded upon this Instance of one of the Thieves upon the Cross, which has from a matter of History and Circumstance been improved to Teach and Advance a new Doctrine, no where else to be found in the Bible; namely, That a wicked Man, when he comes to dye, may hope to be happy and go to Heaven by vertue of a sudden Conversion and a short Death-Bed Repentance, though he has spent his whole Life never

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so carelessly and wickedly : Or that a Death-Bed Repentance may be by the Gospel sufficient and effectual for a Man's Salvation, who has lived a very ill Life, and who does not sooner Repent of it, than when he comes to dye. Now this I think is not only the falsest, but the most Pernicious and Mischievous Doctrine that can be, for it plainly takes away the necessity of a good Life, since that is not necessary which a Man can any way hope to be saved without; and so tends to encourage Men to continue in their sins, with the hopes that they may have time enough to repent of them when they come to dye, and that there is a possible, if not a likely way to save themselves at the last, though they live never so wickedly, provided they have but a little time and warning, which hardly one in five hundred but has to perform this sudden Repentance, and are not prevented to do it by a sudden Death, which is an accident that happens but to few; If there be nothing else but this accidental uncertainty to secure Religion, and the necessity of a good Life, so that otherwise a Sinner may at the last claim the full benefit of Pardon by the Gospel-Covenant if he come in then by a short Repentance, though he has stood out all his Life in Rebellion against God, and may, as we commonly say, dye well, and make a good end, though he lived never so ill: If this be true, then this Gospel-Privilege of Repentance destroys the Gospel it self, and the main End and Design of it, and takes away the

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necessity of Gospel-Holiness and Obedience; in order to our future Happiness; it removes and alters those Conditions of Salvation which are indispensably required by the Gospel, it abates and remits the plain terms of it, and by such a clause of Privilege takes away all the Authority and force of its Commands, and all the Terror of its Threats and Punishments, and in effect unlooses all our Obligations to the Law of God, and to a good Life; whatever does this, and has such mischievous Consequences, and is so contrary to the first and plainest Truths in Religion, as I shall shew this is, cannot surely be a Gospel-Doctrine, and therefore I am persuaded that is not which allows Salvation to a meer Death-Bed Repentance by the terms of the Gospel.

The Great thing to support this, is the instance of the Thief upon the Cross, *Luke* 23. 42, 43. though I shall shew there is no certain ground or true foundation to be had from that of any such thing if we fully consider and examine it.

As to the Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard, *Matth.* 20. who came in at the Eleventh hour, and were rewarded as well as those who were hired at the first; this belongs to another matter, and is spoken in favour of the *Gentiles*, who though not so soon called and taken into the Covenant, as the *Jews*, yet should afterwards be called and received into it, and have as great Privileges, and as great a Reward as the *Jews* themselves who

who were God's first, and peculiar People, hired and called in long before them: So that this is foreign to the case of a late and short Repentance of a dying Christian, who was called or hired as soon as he was baptized, and knew Christianity; and if he loyter all the day, and will not work at all, no not one hour, or any considerable part of his Life, till Night comes, and then when 'tis too late, and he cannot work at all, only falls a crying and sorrowing, and repenting for this his loytering and being Idle, there is nothing in the Parable to excuse such an one, but only those at the most, who had not the knowledge of Christianity, or the means of Salvation sooner offer'd them, but came in and workt as soon as they had, as soon as they were called and hired. The Parable taken altogether, must not be applied further than this, as if it extended to all those Christians who come in and Repent only at the last, or even to those who have one hours time in proportion to their whole lives to do a few Acts of Obedience; for it is by no means true that he who works and is Religious a short and very little part of his Life, shall be as well rewarded, and have as full an hire and recompence of God in another World, as he who does so the whole; for then God would not render to men according to their works, as he hath declared he will do at the last judgment, for tho' he may do what he will with his own, yet his rewards and promises are now fixt and determined by a Covenant; and though God

might bring in the *Gentiles* at the latter hour, and reward them as well as the *Jews*, because there was nothing to the contrary in theirs or any other Covenant, yet now as he *that knows his Masters will, and does it not, shall be beaten with more stripes*, so he that hath well used Ten Talents, shall have a greater improvement, and greater gifts bestowed upon him, and he shall have a higher reward who does more and greater Acts of Vertue in his life, than he who does less; for Heaven, though it be a gift, is a reward too, and shall be exactly proportioned in the degrees of it to the deservings and actions and behaviours of Men.

The main foundation then of this Doctrine of the Efficacy or Sufficiency of a Death-Bed Repentance must be the case of the Thief upon the Cross. *i. e.* the History or Relation of a Man who dyed as a Malefactor, and yet certainly went to Heaven, for that is the whole of it: Now I doubt not but many hundred such Malefactors have gon to Heaven, and many Thousand Sinners that were once bad Men, but yet had they never Repented till they came to dye, I do as verily believe that not one of them had gon thither, but to another place where Men shall for ever repent at the same rate that most Men do who have not done so before that time: To Ground and Establish this Doctrine upon this Historical Case, and 'tis I believe the only Doctrine that has such a foundation we must examine whether it certainly and exactly comes up in all the Particulars and Circumstances

Circumstances of it to the case of a wicked Man's living a very ill life till he comes to dye, and then only repenting of it. We must then enquire whether it plainly and certainly appears from the account the Scripture gives us of it,

1. Whether he were a very ill Man in the whole or general course of his Life?

2. Whether we are sure he did not Repent long before he came to dye? for if these two are not certainly known, nor do appear from Scripture, the case may be very different, and no way suit or answer the late and dying Repentance of a very wicked Man. And,

3. Supposing those two, yet how can we tell whether this might not be an extraordinary case, and such as belongs to no other Sinner whatsoever?

1. Whether it do appear from the account Scripture gives us of him, that he was a very ill Man in the whole or general course of his life? The reason of which inquiry is this, that a general habit of irreligion and wickedness, through the whole course of a Man's life puts him into a more wretched, and dangerous, and deplorable state than any particular Act of Sin, or than any one sin whatsoever; for that like a Leprosie spreads over and corrupts the whole Mind, lays the whole Conscience waste, and roots up all the Principles of Religion, and puts Men in the number of those *who have no fear of God before their eyes, and who live without God in the World*; but a Man may not be

So far gon, not be a Sinner of so high a rate, but may be an imperfectly good Man, and yet fall into a wilful sin by the suddenness or greatness of the Temptation, by Surprise and Inconsideration, and laxness of Thoughts; by a remissness in Religion, and not being duly upon his Guard, and by the struggle that is in his Mind between the Flesh and the Spirit, between this World and another, which makes the one now and then get the better of the other; such an one is a kind of borderer upon Vertue, and lives between the confines of that and wickedness; and sometimes he is governed and brought under the power of one, and sometimes is overcome and made a prey by the other: Now though such an one is not fit for the Kingdom of Heaven, till he comes wholly off from every wilful sin, and is more under the Power of Religion, yet he is nearer to the Kingdom of Heaven, and may sooner by Repentance and becoming a good Man, fit himself for it, and so enter into it. It does not at all appear in Scripture from the History of this Penitent Thief whether he had been a very ill Man or no, in the general course of his Life; only that he was a Thief, which was enough to denominate him *κακός*, and suffered as he himself owns, *justly, and received the due reward of his deeds, Luke 23. 41.* But who knows what abatements his sin might have either by extream necessity, or some other circumstances which God might fairly consider

sider and allow for, though he was brought to an infamous Death here by the severity of Humane Laws? Even a good Man who is so in the general course and habit of his Life, may fall into a particular Act of wilful sin, as we see in *David*, *Moses*, and *St. Peter*, and let him that standeth take heed lest he fall, as the *Apostle* advises, 1 *Cor.* 10. 12. For no Man is perfectly out of danger whilst he is in this state of probation and infirmity; and though every such Sin breaks a Man's good State, and puts him into an ill one, till he recovers himself by Repentance and Amendment; (for Mens States of Grace and Damnation are no way fixt here, but are alterable in this World according to the temper of their Minds, and behaviour of their Lives,) yet 'tis more easie to recover from a single Act than a long habit, as 'tis to cure a green wound than an old Ulcer, or a Chronical Disease: And where there is an habitual soundness within, where the Mind is not vitiated with habitual Corruptions, and evil Principles, and irreligious Habits and Customs, but has a pretty good Sense of Religion, though it happens to be over-powred with a Temptation, there it will sooner recover it self, and throw off the Disease and the Corrupt Matter by its own inward Strength, and the assistance of the Divine Grace; There the inward Sense and the Principles of Religion will unfold and expand themselves by the Power of Restitution, since though they have been prest down and over-powred, yet they have
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not been quite broken and destroyed; the Religious and Vertuous Sense will revive again in the Mind which was not wholly extinguish'd, though very much Damped and Choaked and weakned; and thus they plainly seem to be in this penitent Thief by his Carriage to our Saviour, which I shall consider by and by, by his rebuking the other Thief who was railing at Christ, with that most sober Reprimand, *Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation,* ver. 40. and by the firm belief and full persuasion he had of the happiness of another State, and his Devout and Religious Prayer to Christ to remember him when he came into his Kingdom: These make it very probable, that he was not a very profligate or ill Man in the general course of his Life, but rather such a good one, who lived not in the habit of many great sins, but fell into a particular Act by a Temptation that might greatly lessen it before God, though it made him an Example before Men: But,

2. Whatever his Sin was, however great, and however sinful a Man he had been, yet who knows how long he had repented, and how sincerely, and what fruits he had shewn of his Repentance? We know not when the theft was committed, and whether he did not immediately Repent of it, and make Restitution for it, even before he was apprehended, and before the thoughts and terroures of Death frightened him into it; and herein may lye a mighty difference, for if a Man upon the reflection of his Sin and a wicked Life,

Life; and the serious consideration of the great danger he is in thereby, shall by the Grace of God, setting these things home upon his Mind, strongly fixing and exciting these thoughts in him, shall be brought to good purposes and resolutions of becoming better, and do strengthen and make good these by his Actions, and thus begins to be good, and ceases to be wicked, not from a sudden fright and fear of Death, but from the Convictions of Religion, from the free and full persuasion of his own mind, which is like to remain and continue with him, this puts him into a much better State and Condition, and is more truly Repentance than that which arises in Men when they come to dye, when they have a force put upon them, which almost takes away the true freedom and liberty of their Wills; and therefore what they do then is owing wholly to that, and ceases generally when that is removed: As to the Thief, we know not what his case was, and therefore 'tis meer conjecture to suppose he did not Repent till he came to dye, and 'tis the most groundless thing i'the World to apply his Case to that of a wicked Man, who repents not till he finds he must quickly dye, when so far as we know his was perfectly different, that he was never a very wicked Man in the general Course of his Life, and as for that single Act of Wickedness which is recorded of him, that he might repent of it as soon as he committed it, and that might be many years before he suffered for

for it. We have no certain knowledge of any of these things, and therefore we can make no certain Judgment by it, much less raise a Doctrine from it, which supposes those two things which so far as we know may be both false; and then who would venture his Soul upon such a mere uncertainty as that another Man whom he knows very little of did not repent till he came to dye, and lived very ill all the while before, neither of which may be true: But if they were, yet

3. How can he tell but this may be an extraordinary Case, and such as no way belongs to him, nor to any other Sinner whatsoever? What if Christ to shew the wonderful and miraculous Power of his Cross towards the Salvation of Sinners, was pleased to give an uncommon and extraordinary instance of it at that time, such as no other Sinner should ever expect the like, unless Christ should again come down, and dye, upon the Cross with him? What if God, *who will have Mercy on whom he will have Mercy*, was pleased to let this penitent Thief be a singular Example of his unlimited Power and Prerogative to save beyond all ordinary Rules, because of his dying at that time with Christ? This does no more make it to be a standing and certain measure of his dealing with others, than a Prince's shewing some extraordinary Act of Mercy to a few Persons when he comes first to his Crown, and releasing all Prisoners at his Inauguration, declares that this shall be the constant Rule of his Government or that

that his Subjects shall have reason to expect this at other times from him. Thus the Case might be extraordinary as to God, but I rather lay it as such upon the account of the Person himself; for 'tis certain he was an extraordinary Person who had the honour not only to dye with Christ, and to bear him company upon the Crofs; but to confess and own him there in the face of all his enemies who were then flouting and reviling him, when this good Man was owning him to be the Messiah, calling him *Lord*, and praying him *to remember him when he came into his Kingdom*. So that he declared the most illustrious Act of Faith in him that could be, greater than his own Disciples then had, for they did not so clearly believe and understand his Kingdam not to be of this World, and they all forsook him and fled, when this Man alone bore witness to him before the scoffing *Jews* and all his barbarous Crucifiers, which was being a Martyr to him, though not for him, a confessing him in his Death though not by it. And he that did thus *confess Christ before men*, and was not ashamed to do it when he was in his lowest and most contemptible state, and who probably was for this treated with more insulting mockery if not worser usage by Christ and his own Crucifiers, is it any wonder that Christ according to his Promise *Matth. 10. 32.* should *confess such an one before his Father in Heaven*? And that he who suffered with him, and so eminently believed in him, should reign with him, and be saved and received

ed into his Kingdom? Can a wicked and careless Sinner who has denyed Christ by his Life, who has affronted, disobeyed and contemned him, who in the language of Scripture *has crucified to himself the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame, Heb. 6. 6.* by Apostatizing from his Baptism and by an unchristian Life, can such an one expect to have the same treatment and usage from our Saviour for a few, dying Sorrows, and empty Vows, and little Remorses as this Famous Convert, this Great Confessor, this Eminent Martyr, this Apostle of Christ, as I may call him, who preached him upon the Cross before his greatest enemies, and sealed his Illustrious Faith in him with his dying words and his last breath? No surely, the case must be very different between him and an ordinary and profligate Sinner, a wicked and vile Christian.

I do not think any far fetched Notion necessary to salve this matter of the Thieves Salvation, by supposing him with a late Author, to have the benefit of Baptism, the *Baptismus Sanguinis*, and then that Baptism will save a Man without Obedience and a good Life. For I deny that Baptism has any such Grace or Benefit, as without those to save a wicked Man, tho' he should be Baptized *in articulo Mortis*, when he was just a dying: For if a newly Baptized Person be not actually a good Man in such a degree as God will accept by the Terms of the Gospel, his Baptism shall not save him, though it puts him into a state of Salvation if he be so, but
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not otherwise, as is plain by *Simon Magus*; for the conditions of Salvation are not specifically different before Baptism and after, but only gradually: If they were, a Man would defer his Baptism till near his Death as some did of old upon this mistaken Notion of such a Baptismal Grace as saves a Man by an outward without an inward Regeneration and real Holiness, the actual proof and signs of which the Primitive Church required in the Adult before they admitted them to Baptism. And therefore to suppose a Man may be saved upon Baptism, though he is not a good Man, is not allowable, but if he dye just upon it, God will judge him according to the present temper of his Mind, and the past course of his Actions, allowing him the Gracious Terms of the Gospel which he has now a right to by his Baptism; but to think he can be saved without any Actual Goodness in his Mind and in his Life, is I think very false; though a less degree may save him that knows not Baptism or Christianity than him that does. But as for the Baptism of Blood, or allowing Martyrdom the privilege of Baptism, this is not founded upon ordinary right, but presumptive equity; and Salvation is allowed to them, because no Man but must be presumed to be a very good Man, and have a high degree of actual Ver- and Holiness who dyes a Martyr, and prefers Religion before every thing in this World, even his very Life: And without this in some higher measure than meer Pur-
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poses and Resolutions, and meer Sorrow and Repentance for not having it. I deny that any Baptism, or any thing else will save a Man.

This I say to prevent an Objection that it would not otherwise be easie to Answer, which is this, That if the Grace of Baptism will send a wicked and unqualified Soul to Heaven by vertue of a meer dying Repentance, without any degrees of Actual Holiness, *without which*, the Scripture tells us, *no man shall see the Lord*, why may not the Grace of the Eucharist do the same by the like dying Repentance? Or according to the *Roman* Principles, the Grace of Penance and Absolution, or of Extreme Unction, which have all the same superstitious Error at the bottom.

S E C T. II.

The Pleas and Pretences on behalf of a Death-Bed Repentance Answered.

HAVING shewed that there is nothing in the case of the Thief upon the Cross to support or justify the validity and efficacy of a Death-Bed Repentance, I shall now examine other Pleas and Pretences which are brought for it, and shew how weak and ungrounded they are, so that no Man may believe such a dangerous and mistaken Doctrine, nor venture his Soul not only upon such an uncertain hazard, but such a certain

tain danger and inevitable ruine as that will bring upon him, if he presume upon it and trust to it: I shall consider and rectifie the common prejudices that are about it which are chiefly these following:

First, That at whatsoever time a Sinner repenteth, he shall find Mercy.

Secondly, That if a Man do so heartily and sincerely resolve upon a good Life, that God sees if he should live he would make this good, then this Will shall be taken for the Deed.

Thirdly, That God may turn and change a Man's Heart on a sudden.

Fourthly, That by denying the efficacy of a Death-Bed Repentance, we throw Men into despair, and take away the Arguments that should persuade them then to Repent, and limit God's Mercy, and restrain his Grace, and the like.

First, That Expression, *Whensoever*, or at *what time soever*, a Sinner repenteth he shall find mercy. Now this though it be not express and in so many words in Scripture, and therefore when the words in the Original would not fully bear such a Translation, *Ezek.* 18. 21. and some were offended at it as giving too much encouragement to the Doctrine I am opposing, it was left out of the Sentences beginning our Morning-Prayer, yet if we allow it to be true in the utmost and fullest sense, and there is no great difference between *when* and *whensoever*, or at *what time*

soever, yet it no way avails to the maintaining the efficacy of a late or Death-Bed Repentance; for all that a Man can then do, does not come up to true Repentance, such a Repentance as has Pardon and Salvation promised to it by the Terms of the Gospel. A Man may then be very sorry for his Sins, and heartily troubled and concerned for them, but this Sorrow alone, were it upon never so good Reasons, is not Repentance, but that which may bring us to Repentance, as *St. Paul* says, *Godly sorrow worketh Repentance*, 2 *Cor.* 7. 10. and therefore it is not the thing it self. We may as well suppose that feeling the smart of a Wound is healing it, as meer Sorrow for Sin is true Repentance. Few Sinners and few Malefactors but are thus sorrowful when they come near the place of Punishment and Execution: They are sorry they must suffer for their Sins, and the terrour of their Sufferings makes Sin very bitter to them, but if that were removed, they would love them and commit them perhaps as much as ever. If Sorrow alone for Sin though never so deep and grievous were true Repentance, then *Cain* and *Judas* were as great Penitents as any, and so will all the damned be to all Eternity, who will thus sorrow and thus repent for ever of their Sins, but without any amendment; and they will wish also a thousand times that they had been wiser, and lived better, and had not by their foolish and wicked courses brought themselves into such

a miserable and wretched condition, and would God but let them live over their Lives again, oh how much better would they be ! how much otherwise would they live ! and how heartily would they purpose and resolve to leave all their Sins and lead a very good Life, would God but give them opportunity and space, and try them once more ! This is the language of Sinners both in this World and the next too, when the day of Grace and the time of Tryal is over, when it is too late to do all this which they now wish they had done, but would not do it when God gave them time, and so they have lost the only opportunity which it is impossible to retrieve. Would God grant either the Sinner that is damned, or the Sinner that is a dying, opportunity to live again, they would both be better perhaps ; but since he does not, he will judge them not according to what they would be but what they have been, not according to what they wish and resolve to do, but what they actually have done, since the Scripture no where tells us that Men shall receive according to their Wishes, their Purposes and Resolutions, but according to their Works and Actions, *whether they have been good or evil.* And therefore,

2ly, I believe there is no ground for that determination which has been often given about a Death-Bed Repentance : that if a Man's Purposes are then so sincere that he would make them good if he lived, that then they may be sufficient to his Salvation. Had

God given him time to make them good, and from a bad Man to have become a good one, which is the only true Notion I know of Repentance, then indeed he had fallen under the promises and the measures of the Gospel, where God has declared Pardon to all Men that Repent and Amend, but no where that I know of to those who only resolve to do so, though never so sincerely. And therefore should a Man's Purposes be never so sincere at that time, which I doubt not but they may be as to the present sense of his Mind, that is, he may really intend at that time what otherwise could not be properly called a Purpose or Resolution in him, yet this may may not be afterwards effectual, but may go off as most of the Vows of Sick Men and Ship-wrecked Mariners do when the Sickness and the Storm is over, and they are just as they were before when they are well and upon dry Land; for nothing is more easy and more sudden than to wish and purpose and resolve well, especially when Men are under any great fear or great danger which wholly takes up their Minds, and they consider not so much the difficulty of performing what they resolve upon, as the necessity they see of avoiding the danger that is before them; but when they are got free from that, their Minds and their Purposes change as well as their Circumstances. But let us allow all that can be supposed, that these Purposes of the dying Sinner are not only sincere but would be effectual too, if he lived, which neither

neither he nor any other but only God can know, yet I see no reason to think that God will deal with him for what he might or would hereafter be, and not for what he was or is at present, or that the Rule of the Divine Judgment at the last day shall be this, to reward Sinners because they might have been good Men if they had lived longer, or to punish good Men because they might have been bad perhaps if they had lived longer too, though God had seen either of these in his Infinite Prescience, but thinks fit to prevent them by cutting a Man off and taking him out of the World, he will not acquit or condemn him for foreseen futurities which might or would have happened, but for past and certain Actions which he hath done, and which God himself cannot make to be undone, though he may hinder these to be done which are not, and so to become nothing. 'Tis the present Habit and Temper and Frame of a Man's Mind, and the present Moral state of Virtue or Vice which a Man is in when he dyes shall dispose him to Happiness or Misery; so that 'tis not he that was formerly or might hereafter be a good Man if he had lived, but only he that is so at present in the disposition of his Mind and habit of his Life, is fit for the Kindom of Heaven and *meet for the inheritance of the Saints in light*: And 'tis not he that was a wicked Man heretofore, or might be such afterwards if he had lived in such tryals and circumstances which it pleased God to take him

away from, and so in this sense *take him from the evil to come*, but he that is a wicked Man at present in the habit of his Mind and course of his Life, shall go to Hell. Repentance is not a resolution to forsake Sin and become a good Man, but the becoming so after we have been otherwise in any instance. And he that has lived very carelessly and wickedly all his Life, and only resolves to live otherwise when he comes to dye, can no more be called a good Man than he a good Scholar that has spent all his time idly in the University, but when he is to be expelled from thence resolves to study hard: Or he a Rich Man who has prodigally wasted all his Estate, but when it is gon almost to the last Farthing resolves to save and become Rich. Good resolutions are good spurs to quicken, and are necessary to carry on and put us upon any great or excellent design, but if the design were attained as soon as it is purposed and resolved upon, no Man would miss of his end, nor ever fail of being Wise and Learned, and Rich and Great, if a sudden resolution of being so would do the business. Nor would any Sinner be either miserable or wicked when he comes to dye, if it were sufficient to purpose and resolve at that time to become good and happy. 'Tis a loose and a false Notion of Repentance which places it in meer purposes, and in good Wishes and Resolutions, and in a short transient passion and compunction of Mind and inward working

ing of thoughts, rather than in a settled and permanent change both of Mind and Actions, in a new Heart and a new Life, in turning from Sin, and doing that which is lawful and right, in being renewed in our Minds, and amending and reforming our ways in which the Scripture places it, that has given occasion to this dangerous mistake of the sufficiency of a Death-Bed Repentance; but Repentance, as I have all along shewed, is a greater thing than most imagine. 'Tis not a slight Remedy, but a Medicine made up indeed of a great many parts and ingredients, such as Sorrow and Trouble, and Fasting and Confession, and good purposing and resolving, and the like; but till these work the Cure, and make the Mind better, purge out all the sickly matter, free the Soul from all its Sins, and restore it to a state of Vertue and Religion, of Grace and Goodness, they all signifie nothing; for true and perfect Repentance must be like Health, or a recovery after Sicknes, and till the Mind is brought off from its sick and weak state, from all its Spiritual Maladies and Sinful Habits, to a good degree of soundness, and a Vertuous Crasis and Constitution, so as to be free from Sin, work Righteousness, and perform the proper Acts of the Divine Life, so as the drunkard is made sober, the unclean chaste, the unrighteous not only just but charitable, the profane and irreligious devout and pious, and the like, it has not Repented as the Scripture requires, nor is it qualified for Pardon or for future Hap-

piness; for no wicked Man in any kind shall enter into Heaven, 1 Cor. 6. 9. till he be made good after he has been otherwise in any instance; for one wilful and habitual Sin continued in will certainly damn him, and nothing but Obedience, which if it be after Disobedience is called Repentance, is the Gospel Condition of our Salvation, and without this, Faith and trust in Christ, and hopes in God's Mercy and Free Grace, which are the true supports and comforts to a good Man, are deceitful comforts and meer delusions to a bad one, for *without holiness and habits of Grace and Goodness, no man shall see the Lord*; and *if we will enter into life, we must keep the Commandments*. And God surely did not give us such Commands that we should either keep them while we live, or else Repent of not doing it when we come to dye; then a Man might break them all while he lives, and only Repent that he had not kept them when he is a dying, and this should be instead of keeping of them, which would defeat and destroy all the Gospel, and all the necessity of Obedience and a Holy Life, and keeping God's Commandments, and God must then alter those Terms, and alter even his own Judgment at the Last Day, and not judge us by our Works, nor by what we have done in the flesh whether it be good or evil, but only by the sincerity of our dying Repentance, which I nowhere find mentioned, nor is this disjunctive any where in the Gospel, Leave thy
sins

sins and live well, and keep my Commands, or else Repent and be sorry for not doing all these things at the last, and that shall be as well. But I shall by and by give my positive Arguments more fully against this mischievous mistake.

3ly, The next difficulty, and the next plea for a Death-Bed Repentance is this, That God may on a sudden so powerfully alter a Man's Mind, and so work upon his Heart by his Spirit, as to change and convert him, and make him another Man in a very little time or just before he dyes. I answer, God may do this if he pleases to exert his utmost force and power upon us, and so he may raise us again after we are dead, and make us live a new Life upon Earth, but we are not I suppose ordinarily to expect this, no more are we the other, which is as contrary to the ordinary Methods of his Grace, as the other of his Providence. God does not use a miraculous and extraordinary power in either, and for any Man to depend upon this, is a downright tempting of God, and by neglecting the common means which he has put into his hands, to call for a Miracle which God will not grant to the careless and idle when there is no need of it. God has given us all sufficient Means, sufficient Motives and Arguments, sufficient Grace and Assistance to Repent and leave our Sins; and if we will not make use of these, but abuse the Talents he has committed to us, he will not for that reason give us a double number, when we come

come to dye, and dispense the more to us for our having been idle and prodigal all our lives. The habits of sin and wickedness which we have been contracting all our Lives will not be changed on a sudden when we come to dye, when we have complained so long and often of our sins, as being so hard to be overcome, and so impossible to be left off, shall we expect all of a sudden to have it become so easie a matter, and so sudden a business to get rid of them? when we have suffered them to run so long upon us, and have not thought 'em curable by all the Methods of Grace and Religion, shall we think to meet with a sudden Charm and Amulet for them that shall cure them we know not how? Some Men talk of infused habits without being able to reconcile them either to Sense or to Nature, and of instantaneous Conversion, without being able to give any one example of any such thing from all the Scripture; some indeed were suddenly and miraculously converted to Christianity, as *St. Paul*, and the Goaler; and a Man may be brought to believe otherwise than he did by such a strong Argument as a Revelation, which shall immediately turn his Judgment and Understanding; but to have him that has been a long while accustomed to do evil, in an instant do good, is without president in Scripture, and no way reconcileable with that known place of *Jerem. 13. 23.* A Man cannot suddenly step out of the ways of Vice into those of
Vertue;

Vertue; they do not lye near, but contrary to one another; so that a Man must go back and undo his vitious habits, and unravel all his sinful customs by degrees before he can attain to the contrary Vertuous ones, which are not to be acquired without great pains and time, and long care and watchfulness. To root out Vice and make Grace grow in the heart, is not an easie nor a sudden work, we find how much it costs us to mortifie a lust, to conquer a passion, to master an ill Inclination, and what pains we must take with our selves to do this, and can we think all this may be done on a sudden, by a Man who has all his days lived loosely, and given the reins to all these; that he can be made that in a moment which he could not be made all his Life? God may indeed give him a New Soul, and that a very Vertuous one, and Annihilate his Old one that was so habitually vitious, but to make that good in a moment is more difficult than the other, more contrary to Nature, and what is as little to be expected so far as I know from God. The sum is, none but a good Man can go to Heaven, and none can be made such on a sudden without a Miracle; and no Man can expect to be saved by that, but by the ordinary Means and Grace of the Gospel. Those Graces and Vertuous habits which can alone qualifie and make us meet for Heaven, cannot be brought into our Souls on a sudden, nor can any sudden convictions, or sudden Thoughts and sudden Passions change and
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alter a Man's mind so as to renew it, and put it in another frame, and make it inwardly Holy and Righteous when it was habitually bad before, without so much time, and so many Acts of Obedience as shall change its Principles, Thoughts, Inclinations, Affections, Temper, Disposition, and the like. In vain had God commanded us so many Vertues, and so many Acts of Obedience as Qualifications and Conditions to fit our Minds for Eternal Happiness, if without living in those, and performing them any time our Souls might be disposed and fitted for it. There cannot be a sufficient change of the Mind for this purpose without change of Life and Actions. To talk of inward Principles of Grace in the heart without vital Acts of Holiness and Obedience in the Life, and that an old Sinner by such a new Principle infused into him, is a kind of Embrio Saint, just conceived, though not formed as he should be, nor able to perform any Acts of Obedience, is to strain a Metaphor, and depend upon a Similitude without rightly understanding the thing; Every Christian hath this inward Principle of Grace infused into him by vertue of his Baptism and Christianity, and it exerts it self with his own will and endeavours all his Life, unless hindred by him; and it is never perfectly taken away from any perhaps, or at least only from the most Vile and Profligate of Sinners in this World, but it will and doth stir and move, even in very wicked Minds, but this

is all ineffectual, and to no purpose, unless it produce Acts of Vertue and Obedience and a Good Life, without which it neither Sanctifies nor Regenerates, nor makes us good Men, nor fit for Heaven, and without those which are the Vital Motions and Effectual Operations of this Grace of the Gospel which is given us by our Baptism, he who may be supposed to have this inward Principle infused into him, and stirring with his fears at the time of his Death, yet for all that is but an Abortive Christian, and hath neither the new Birth or Regeneration, nor the Divine Life in him.

4/y. The great Prejudice against this Doctrine is this, that 'tis too severe, and will tend to make us judge overhardly of others, and to throw dying Sinners into despair, as being in an hopeless State by the Gospel, and so hinder their Repentance at that time as being insufficient, and ineffectual. To which I answer, That 'tis no more severe than the Gospel is, which shuts every wilful Sinner out of Heaven, and pronounces Damnation upon every one that does not live a good Life, at least after a bad one, which is the true Notion of Repentance; but we must make a new Gospel if we abate of this, and come lower than is any way consistent with the Divine Wisdom and Government, and with securing Vertue and Religion, and not opening a wide door to Looseness and Licentiousness, and encouraging Men in their Sins rather than bringing them off from them; I believe indeed 'tis more
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out of pity and tenderness than any good ground in Reason or Scripture that the other Doctrine has took place; but we must not pervert the Gospel out of an unreasonable tenderness, and by pretending to be more merciful than God is or has declared himself to be; and 'tis I doubt the greatest cruelty to our own and others Souls thus to deceive 'em into ruin by giving them hopes contrary to the Gospel; and I account it the greatest charity to fore-warn Men of their danger, and to free them from such a fatal mistake: It does not so much concern us to judge other Men, and apply this Doctrine to them, as to our selves; God is their proper Judge to whom we ought to leave them, and to their own Master they shall stand or fall at the great day; but 'tis more dangerous to assume a sort of Power to dispense with the Laws of God by our pretended Charity, and to give a relaxation to the Rules of the Gospel, and the conditions of Salvation out of undue Piety, and in effect to blame and condemn God, and think he deals more hardly with Sinners than he ought to do, or than we our selves would do, when he pronounces Damnation upon them for their bad Lives, and will not save them for their dying Repentance; out of this Principle of pity others have gon farther, and denied the Eternity of Hellish Torments, and have thought it too hard that God should punish the sins of a short Life with never-ending pains, and have therefore thought good in their

their great gity to release all the Damned, and even the Devils themselves out of Hell within so many years; but this is to understand the Measures and Reasons of the Divine Government better than God himself, to prescribe new ones to him contrary to what he has lay'd down, to set up a Court of Equity upon him in our thoughts, and to correct the fixt Rules and declared Measures of his Justice and Mercy with some others of our own, which surely is not to be allowed.

As to the driving Sinners into despair by this Doctrine; this cannot be said of those who have time before 'em to repent and live better, if they make use of it, and nothing will more strongly excite them, and more immediately put them upon this than the the faithful and open telling them truth as I have done, and taking them off from all hopes and trust of a dying Repentance, which has destroyed so many Souls. As for the dying Sinner himself, however I pity him, I dare not give him hopes farther than I have warrant from God and Authority from the Gospel, which no Minister can have to assure him of Pardon and Salvation from a mere late and Death-Bed Repentance. He can only advise such an one to do all he can at that time, which may help, if not wholly to remit his punishment, yet in some measure, to abate and mitigate it, which is a very great thing, and commend him to the Extraordinary and Uncovenanted Mercy of God, which is not limited by any thing but the

the rectitude of his own Nature, to which we must leave some great Cases not knowing what to judge of them our selves ; but as to the ordinary and covenanted Mercy of God which he himself has limited, and which ought not be stretcht or extended any more than narrowed or confined to any other bounds than those of the Gospel, such a Repentance has no title to it by any promise there that I know of, and therefore I would not for all the world venture my Soul upon it, nor would have any Man else to do so ; for besides all other hazards of a sudden Death and the like that attend such a Repentance, 'tis venturing whether God will not break the Rules and Measures of the Gospel, or at least abate them, and be more merciful than he has there promised to be, which no Man has any reason to expect he should be, but rather a great deal to question whether he can be.

Let none of us therefore trust to such a Late and Death-Bed Repentance which will expose us not only to infinite danger, but to inevitable and certain ruin ; nor let us believe any such Doctrine which has no foundation either from the Thief on the Cross, or from any thing else in Scripture to be relyed on, but however severe the other Doctrine be, let us consider it is true as I shall fully prove it is, and I know no Mischief of its severity but this which is the plain consequence of it, that we must not delay our Repentance, but take care to live a good life if we hope to go to Heaven.

S E C T.

SECTION III.

*The Invalidity of a Death-Bed Repentance
shewn from the Parable of the Wise and
Foolish Virgins.*

HAVING Examined and Answered the Pleas and Pretences on behalf of a Death-Bed Repentance I shall shew its Invalidity and Insufficiency by such plain and positive Proofs as shall take away that common error and fatal mistake on the other side, and fully confirm and establish my Opinion against it. The first whereof shall be that Excellent Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins, *Math. 25.* especially the latter part of it at the 10, 11, 12. verses, for I shall not represent it entire in all the parts, but only what is more full and home to my purpose in relation to the foolish Virgins, of whom it is said, *That while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut; afterwards came also the other Virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us; but he answered and said, verily I know you not.*

Parables were an *Eastern* and *Jewish* way of instruction very frequently used by their wisemen, and so made customary to the people, for all forms and modes and habits of speech like those of cloths would look odd and antick and uncouth that were not so; as they were very antient and very common a-

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mong them and from thence taken up by our Saviour, so they were very agreeable to Nature, and a most useful lively and familiar way of representing any Truth or Doctrine by way of History and Similitude; They shewed us the thing in an Image and Picture, so that we saw it as it were before us, and it thereby made a strong impression upon both the fancy and the memory, and they set us a pattern and example of it by which we might the most easily comprehend, understand and remember it, and have it as it were in a Scene drawn before our eyes and acted before us, which are the most natural ways by which Mankind are to be taught moved and affected; Abstracted naked Truths are many times too fine for their gross thoughts and understandings, and they cannot conceive Spiritual things so well as when they are drest up in another garb, and brought down to their Senses; Most of our thoughts and apprehensions are formed by such ideas and images on the brain and mind as are the draughts and models of the things themselves, and Parables have these two things in them which are apt to make the strongest impression upon the minds of Men, which are Imagery or Picture, Acting or Representation by Example. Now in these Dramatical Composures and Instructions there is a main Plot or one chief and Principal Design runs through the whole, and is chiefly aimed at and carried on in all the parts and acts of it, and that is chiefly to be minded as the Scope and Aim of the Parable, the Air and Countenance and Eye as I may call

call it of this moral Picture, which looks upon such a principal Truth, Doctrine and Instruction as what it intends chiefly to convey and represent thereby to our minds: Now the very Scope and Drift and Design of the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins is to shew that we ought to be always prepared and provided for another World, and that there is no hopes of entering into Heaven by any thing we can do on a sudden when the Bridegroom is just a coming, and when Death is just upon us and very near us, and we are unprepared before for it: These three things are plainly meant and imported and aimed at by it.

1. That we cannot enter into Heaven without Holy and Vertuous Habits and Dispositions of Mind:

2. That these are not to be had or attained on a sudden:

3. That without those we shall be shut out of Heavens notwithstanding our most earnest Desires, Prayers and Entreaties, and all other Applications we can make to enter in.

1. That we cannot enter into Heaven without Holy and Vertuous Habits and Dispositions of mind: Those are meant by the Oyl which the Wise Virgins had in their Vessels but the Foolish were without, and not sensible of the need of it till it was too late; to think that our Soul may be happy and fit for Heaven without those is as foolish

and inconsiderate as to think that a Lamp will burn without Oyl, without that which is to feed and constitute and maintain the flame; Vertue and Holiness are the main Things in which the Happiness and Perfection of the Mind consists, the highest Improvement of all its faculties and capacities, and the foundation of all that Peace Joy Bliss and Satisfaction which it can have in it self or any thing else, and the only qualification to make it capable of receiving all the Happiness that can be communicated to it; without these as we are unworthy of being received into Heaven, which is the highest reward which God appoints to those who most faithfully serve and obey him, and which he will never give to such vile and undeserving Wretches as have contemned it all their lives, and not thought it worth any of their pains and endeavours, and therefore he has barred and excluded all wilful Sinners out of it of what kind soever, by a positive Decree and Declaration, *1 Cor. 6. 10. Galat. 5. 19, 20.* So they shut out themselves by a Natural Incapacity and Unfitness, for Heaven is the Place and Region of the purest Vertue and the most perfect and God-like Holiness, and nothing else can dwell there or be capable of the pleasures and enjoyments that are to be met with in it. An old Sinner with his corrupt Habits, and depraved and vicious Inclinations about him, would find nothing there to entertain him, no suitable objects or proper actions to delight and please him, but

but would be as unfit to be took from his Vices and put into Heaven, as a Swine from wallowing in the mire to be placed on a Throne. As God will not suffer any such impurity to approach that holy place nor any unclean thing to enter into it, so it could not be supposed capable of enjoying the proper and Spiritual Happiness of it, till it was very much changed and altered and brought off from the love of Vice to the love of God and Goodness, and so fitted to partake both of the Favour of one and the good and Happiness of the other.

'Tis certain none but good Men shall enter into Heaven, and partake of the Joys and Glories above, *which God hath laid up for those that love him*; all others are both unworthy and incapable to enjoy them, and shall never taste of any part of them; as I shall shew by a few Considerations.

1. From the Nature of God.
2. From the Nature of Heaven as a Gift and Reward.
3. From the Nature of its Happiness.
4. From the Nature of our Minds which are to be the subjects of it.

1. From the Nature of God, which is the standard and measure both of all Holiness and Happiness too, so that the more any Being approaches to that, the nearer it is to Happiness, and the more contrary it is to that, the more miserable it must necessarily be. Now Holiness and Vertue is the

only thing by which we can be like God, and become partakers of the Divine Nature, and *are changed into the same Image*, and the greatest resemblance of his Glorious Perfection, 2 Cor. 3. 18. and therefore 'tis the only thing that can advance us to the highest degrees of Happiness. That which makes the Devils themselves such miserable wretches, nay Hell it self so wretched a state, is their contrariety and repugnancy to God and Goodness, their being so directly opposite to the Divine Nature, their not having the least Ray of Divine Goodness and Holiness to dwell in that place of Darkness, the sink and centre of all Sin and Wickedness. And Heaven it self is therefore so happy, so blisful a place, because 'tis the Region of all Divine Vertue and Holiness, because it advances us to a God-like State and Perfection, and transforms us into the nearest likeness of God himself, and is the fullest participation of him and his Perfections. All Vertue and Holiness is an efflux or irradiation of the Divine Nature communicated to the Humane; God's Essential Holiness transfused into our Nature, his Image imprinted upon our Minds, and therefore it makes us the Children of God in the Scripture language, and so naturally and necessarily beloved by him, even in some degree as he loves himself and takes infinite complacency and delight in his own Essential Perfections and Original Holiness. *The righteous Lord loveth righteousness*, Psal. 11. 7. from his own Righteous Nature,

ture; and for the same reason, *The wicked his Soul hateth*, for he cannot love any Being so contrary to himself, and so repugnant to his own Righteous and Holy Nature; for we may as well suppose him to hate himself or to love the Devils, the most opposite to himself, and therefore the most accursed Beings, as to love a very wicked and impure Soul which does truly partake of the Diabolical Nature, and is most repugnant to Divine. He cannot take such an one into his special Love and Favour, and communicate any of his own Happiness to it and admit it into Heaven, which is the highest degree and fullest participation of his Love and of his Happiness, upon the account of its unlikeness and contrariety to the Essential Perfections and Holiness of the Divine Nature.

2. God cannot bestow Heaven upon any but those who are Good and Vertuous, as 'tis a Gift and Reward proposed and promised by him only to such as are so. God as he is a Just Judge and an Impartial Distributer of Rewards and Punishments, and *will render to every man at the last day according to his work*, he cannot without injury to that Character, and the plain charge and imputation of Partiality and Injustice, bestow and confer so great a Reward as Heaven is to be, upon those who are wholly unworthy and undeserving of it, who have lived wickedly and disobediently all their Lives, had no regard to the Honour and Glory of God, nor doing him any service in the World,

nor made Heaven and Religion and Vertue their great end, but gratified their Vices and enjoyed their Lusts, and allowed themselves in all the undue liberties of Sensual Pleasures, and broken the Divine Commands, and lived in a direct and open opposition to God and Religion. If such Men shall be at last rewarded by God as well as those who have faithfully served him, and sincerely obeyed him, and made it their business to promote his Honour and promote Religion, and do all the good they could in the World, who have denied themselves all unlawful pleasures and vicious gratifications, and have took great pains with themselves, to conquer their sensual inclinations, and overcome the Temptations of this World, and to live up to the strict rules and answer the great ends and designs of Religion, if the reward of Heaven and the Crown of Glory be not laid up for these, and they alone partakers of it, and not the other, then God will be thought at that great day *when he says he will judge the World in righteousness*, not to have done right to his Creatures nor to have had a due regard to their Actions, not to have loved and rewarded Vertue, punish'd and hated Vice as they deserved, and not to have dealt with Mankind according to the known measures of Justice among themselves, and the certain rules of distributing rewards and punishments. The whole Scripture assures us the contrary to this, and the reason of the thing makes it impossible to be otherwise; for tho' Heaven is the Gift of God infinitely

infinitely beyond what is due to any of our Vertues, yet 'tis a Reward too, and shall be given in a way of Justice, and in such a manner as is agreeable to the rules of Righteousness.

3. Such is the Nature of this Heavenly Happiness that none but good Men can partake of it, for none but they can love God and delight in him, and take any complacency and satisfaction in the enjoyment of him. The wicked whilst he continues such is an enemy to God and a hater of him, and whilst he is so, were he carried to Heaven, he would be only like a Traytor taken captive and brought in Chains to his Prince's Court, where it would be no pleasure to see him upon his Throne in all his greatness whom he hated, against whom he had been a Rebel, and from whom he could never expect any favour; and therefore the being thus brought into his Presence and seeing all his Glory would be only a greater vexation to him, and an adding to his misery; and only more torment him as it does the Devils, to see and know there is such a Being above them whom they can never have their Friend or be reconciled to. No Man while he is wicked can have any more hopes of this than those wretched Spirits, and therefore can never have any, or be capable of any happy communion or fruition of God in Heaven. And as to the spiritual pleasures and noble enjoyments there, they are no more suited and adapted to him than any other pleasures are to one that has lost the proper

proper Faculties to which they should be agreeable, and by which he should have the perception of them, than Musick to one that is deaf, or Light and Beauty to one that is blind, and therefore such a vicious wretch cannot be imagined to be in any other condition in Heaven, were he to go thither with his sinful Habits, than all other Animals are when they are taken out of their proper Elements; for Heaven is no place, nor has no suitable pleasures and entertainments but for those who love God and Goodness, and delight in the exercises and enjoyments of Religion.

4. From the Nature of our own Minds 'tis impossible we can enter into Heaven or be capable of Happiness, without Holiness and Vertue. Our Happiness there must be suited to those Faculties and Capacities which belong to us; it must lye in the highest perfection and improvement of the several powers of our Minds, and the most proper sense and enjoyment resulting from thence, when our Understandings are advanced to the highest knowledge especially of God and the Divine Nature, which is that Beatifick Vision, that seeing of God as he is, in which the Scripture places the chiefeft part of Heavenly Happiness, when the Will chooseth the chiefeft and supream good with the greatest vigour and ardour, and enjoys it with the highest rapture and extasie of fruition. When our Souls are thus improved with the brightest understanding of Truth, and the strongest love and willing of Good. When our Powers

Powers and Faculties are the most raised and perfected, the most enlarged and opened, and filled up with the fullest enjoyment of those their proper Objects, then they are in the most happy and pleasurable state imaginable. Now nothing can do this but Religion and Wisdom and Vertue, which are the highest accomplishment and improvement of our Minds, without which we can never enjoy the true Happiness we were made for, and to which our Minds are fitted. Vertue alone can give that, and all the Pleasure, Peace and Joy that result from it, whereas Wickedness will necessarily not only corrupt and impair the Mind and spoil its Faculties, but disorder and wound and corrode it, and make it very painful and uneasie and a Hell and Torment to it self.

2. As none but good Men shall enter into Heaven, so none can be made good on a sudden. Those Vertuous and Holy Habits and Dispositions of Mind are not to be had or attained immediately, in a little time and on a sudden hurry; as is intimated here by the Virgins wanting Oyl, and not being able to procure or buy it in their present distress when the Bridegroom was a coming. We must be prepared and provided with those things that are necessary for our Future Happiness before Death comes and puts us on a sudden hurry, and alarms us with its unexpected approach, or else we shall be sadly disappointed and unprovided if

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we expect to procure or attain them then. If we think to borrow of anothers Vertues and Merits to help out our own defects and wants at that time, as they of the Church of *Rome* imagine something like these foolish Virgins; or as others, that the Bridegroom himself shall supply them in an extraordinary manner out of his stock, though they have no Oyl at all in their own Vessels, no Righteousness of their own: All these vain hopes and expectations of idle and careless and foolish Sinners, will then deceive and disappoint them and make them miserable. If Men have not attained to the Vertues and Graces of Religion, nor any degrees of Holiness and Goodness all their Lives, and think to acquire them now on a sudden when they are near dying, they may as well hope that a Tree that has bore no Fruit all the Year, should on a sudden, when it is just to be cut down, and the Axe is laid to the root of it, sprout and bud, and blossom and bring forth Fruit. This would be a strange Miracle, and it must be as great and unaccountable to have a wicked Man on a sudden become a good one, and bring forth the Fruits of Vertue and Repentance. All our Vertues are owing to the Grace of God, as the growth of all Plants and Trees is to the Rain, and warmth and influence of the Heavens, but to think that God's Grace which could not work upon a Man all his Life before, will now in such an extraordinary manner change and convert him on a sudden as to make him immediately become

a good Man, is to suppose a Saint made, as *Adam* was in full growth and perfect stature the first day he lived, without passing through the degrees of Youth and Childhood; as God thinks not fit to make Mankind so now, but produces them by the ordinary and appointed way of his Providence, so he makes good Men by the ordinary methods of his Grace and influences of Religion, and the New Creature is formed by degrees, and grows into a perfect Man, and increases in Wisdom and Goodness till it comes to the measure of the stature of the fulness in Christ Jesus. The Spirit worketh upon our Minds agreeably to their Nature in a manner indiscernable from its own proper operation, enlighteneth the Understanding, and inclineth the Will gently and kindly by the thoughts and considerations of Religion, offering them clearly and imprinting them strongly upon the Soul, and so in a rational way begetting right apprehensions and affections in it, and so altering the temper and disposition of the Mind, and by frequent acts and repeated practices bringing a Man to new Habits, and thus converting him from bad to good, not in an instant but by long *strivings* and gradual operations upon him. No very bad Man was ever made a good one on a sudden, nor can any more be so by the Grace of the Gospel, than a Child over night become a Man the next morning by the course of Nature and Providence, or Seed sown in the ground spring up and ripen and bear Fruit in a few hours. Such

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Mushroom Converts and Penitents have no good root but dye away, and wither as suddenly and instantaneously as they came up with the first heat and tryal of a Temptation; till Religion shoots deeper into their Hearts and gets better rooting in their Souls, like the Seed that fell on stony ground, it is quickly gon, and does not grow at all, nor bring forth fruit with patience, as the Scripture emphatically speaks, *i. e.* with due continuance. Good Purposes and Resolutions and such like good Principles of Action must continue some time upon the Mind, and exert their power and efficacy upon it by proper acts and tryals and experiments; or else they are but like false conceptions that produce nothing, like Clouds without Rain, Blossoms without Fruit, and abortive causes without any effects.

A sudden Sorrow upon a wicked Mind will no more make it good, nor bring forth the worthy fruits of Repentance, than a sudden shower upon the Sands of *Arabia*, or Rocks of *Caucasus* will make them become fertile and good ground; there must be long cultivation, and great labour and pains taken with such barren ground before it will be a fruitful Soil, and bring forth any thing by all the showers and influences of Heaven upon it. A hardened Sinner who hath lived many years in the wretched courses and habits of Wickedness, must by long time, and great care, and many methods of God's Grace and Goodness have his Heart changed, and his Life mended, and his old Vicious Habits pluck-

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ed up, and new Vertuous ones planted in their place; and these take root, and grow up, and bear Fruit in his Life, before he can become such a good Man as is fitted for Heaven: Such an one can never be made so in a little time just before Death, but it must require at least a good part of his Life to become such, and it should be indeed the business of your whole Lives to make our selves such as shall be thus fit for Heaven. To think that great work can be done at the latter end when we are just a dying, and may be dispatched in a very little time, all on a sudden, is as idle and unreasonable, as for a Man that has a good day's journey to take to lye loytering, and never mind it till the Sun is near down and night is coming upon him, and then to set out and think to reach it by a sudden start, or by some unaccountable ways to fly thither, or be Magically transported and set down he knows not how at his journeys end: Or rather to make the Case more exactly parallel to an old Sinner, like one who hath travelled almost all the day in a wrong way, and spurred and driven on very furiously in his vicious courses, and is now to turn back and begin to take the right way when the day is far spent, and night is at hand and just upon him. So is it with a Man who hath been all his Life following his Vices, driving on in a full career of Wickedness, and galloping in the way to Hell and the broad road of Damnation, and yet thinks by a Death-Bed Repentance and a short stop at the last to come to Heaven. Good God! What thoughts have

have such Men of the great work and business of Religion, which ought to be the great work and employment of our Lives, who think to dispatch it all in a few moments; as if God gave us not our Lives to spend them in his Service and to his Glory, and to work out our Salvation, and fit our selves for Heaven, and do good, and grow in Grace, and the like great ends of Life, but we might pass by all those and wallow in our Lusts and spend almost all our days in the gratifications of Vice and Wickedness and in the Devils service, and think it enough to put off God with a very small part at the last, and devote our dying hours, or a short time, when we know we must live no longer to Religion and Repentance. This is to think God a very easy Master, and Religion a very easy work, and Heaven a reward very easily to be attained and come at, and that none of them are to be so much minded and regarded but that a little time will serve the turn, and that all may be done and taken care of at the last, though not quite so well indeed, yet upon a forced-put the whole business, may be dispatcht in a very little time, so as to secure the main chance and not fail of the great end of Religion, which is to save a Man's Soul and go to Heaven; If this can be done on a sudden, few Men will care to spend much time, more time than needs about it, and this very Mistake and Opinion is the reason why they do not, but generally neglect and cast off Religion, and go on in their Sins and live carelessly

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And wickedly, and can never be persuaded to a strictly Vertuous and holy Life, though they believe Religion and are very far from any Atheistical Doubts and Denials of it; but they think to do all the great work at the last, something that shall serve instead of all the rest, *i. e.* to Repent and be sorrowful for their sins, for they account this sufficient Repentance, and that the dying thus penitent shall be as well as if they had minded Religion all their lives and discharged the great ends of it. If it will by the fixt terms and standing provision of the Gospel save their Souls and carry them to Heaven, it is as well and will serve their purpose as well, and the great purpose of Religion, and God designed and appointed it should do all this, which we no where find in Scripture, and which to suppose would destroy all Religion.

3. Without those holy Habits and Dispositions, Graces or Vertues of Mind we shall be shut out of Heaven notwithstanding all we can do at the last, notwithstanding our most earnest Desires, Prayers and Entreaties, and all other applications we can make to enter in; this the Foolish Virgins found, though they beg'd hard, and pray'd earnestly, and knockt loud, and cry'd *Lord, Lord*, and were never so importunate with the Bridegroom to let them in, and presumed no doubt upon having a peculiar Interest in him, if not some Relation to him, as many do to Christ, yet all would not do without timely preparation and having Oyl in their Lamps, *i. e.* Grace and Vertue in their hearts; *The door was shut,*

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and all their cries would not open it, and though they call'd the Bridegroom Lord Lord, and had some pretended Acquaintance or Friendship with him, and reposed some Trust and Confidence in him, yet all was in vain and to no purpose, without due qualifications in themselves; His Answer was, *I know you not*, as Christ's will be at the last day to those wicked Men who yet put mighty hopes in him, and trust and rely very strongly upon him for Salvation, and think they have some claim and pretence to his special love and favour, and call him Lord Lord, Saviour Saviour, and the like; but yet if they have not *done the will of his Heavenly Father* in their lives, done their Duty, and made themselves fit for Heaven, he will profess unto them, *I never knew you, depart from me ye that work iniquity*, Matth. 7. 22, 23.

Earnest and importunate Prayers are very prevailing Applications to God when the thing is fit to be granted and we fit to receive it, and when God can with consistency to his Wisdom and Justice and other Attributes bestow the favour we ask of him, and 'tis according to the promises he hath made to us, so that we can ask in Faith, and have good reason to believe it shall not be denyed, because there is no bar or just cause either in God or our selves to hinder it; then we shall be certainly sure of it, and God will always *give to those who thus ask him*; but 'tis not our unreasonable though never so importunate Prayers that will make God do an unfit or unreasonable thing, or prevail with him to break the Rules
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of his Wisdom and Justice, or out of pity and tenderness violate the standing wise Methods of his Providence and Government: Pity and Compassion is not a weak passion in God as it is in Men, who are in pain to see another fall into such a Misery as they are subject to themselves, and which may as well fall upon them, and therefore they have a fellow-feeling of it, because it touches them with the quick thought of their own frailty and liableness to it; but God is subject to no such weakness and uneasiness, and therefore pity in him is but a wise Exercise or Effect of his Goodness, whereby he is inclined to inflict as little evil and do as much good to his Creatures as the Capacities of their Nature, and the Perfections of his own will admit.

Should a Wise and Good Governour out of weak pity and commiseration to the cries and lamentations of condemned Prisoners and dying Malefactors stop the course of Justice and suspend the Execution of wholesom and necessary Laws, He would destroy his Government by his easiness, and bring a thousand times more Mischief to the Publick, and so his Pity instead of a Virtue would become both imprudence and cruelty in the highest degree.

God, as he is Pityful and Merciful, so he is Wise and Just too, and will not break the standing Rules of the Gospel nor the wise measures of his Divine Government by which he impartially distributes Rewards and Punishments according to Mens Works, out

of any fond consideration to any Man's particular case. He will not, he cannot act contrary to the unalterable Rules of Justice, either in punishing the innocent, or clearing and letting the guilty go free. He must lay down his Government of the World if he were merciful contrary to those, and should not so far regard his own Honour, and assert his Power and Authority, and Justifie the goodness of his Laws as to revenge all open affronts against them, and punish all great and notorious and habitual Sinners notwithstanding all their Prayers and Entreaties to the contrary; If the cries and lamentations of a dying Sinner should make God forgive him out of meer Pity and tenderness though he had broke all the Laws of Heaven in his life and lived in direct opposition against them and never took any care to keep them, this must alter the Rule of God's Government, the Rule of the Gospel, and the Rule of his last Judgment, and he must for his sake break and act contrary to all those. If notwithstanding those, God's Pity and Mercy to a poor Wretch could suffer or incline him to do this, we might then as reasonably hope that this his pity might reach even to the damned in Hell; their Case is very pitiable and very lamentable as well as the others, and their cries and howlings and lamentations are very loud and importunate; but they are unseasonable and too late, and therefore God is deaf to them. One would think if Pity could so over-rule Justice as to prevail with it to dispense with the severe
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and righteous Rules lay'd down by the great God, it would put out the flames of Hell, or let the tears and cries of the damned quench those dreadful and Everlasting burnings, and not suffer so many poor and miserable Creatures to lye tortured for ever in the utmost Extremity; but God's Justice and Judgment is as deep and bottomless as Hell it self; and though we cannot search into all the reasons of it, yet we know by his word that it shall take place and be duly executed notwithstanding his own greatest Pity and Mercy, or his Creatures greatest Cries and Lamentations.

A groundless presumption of God's Mercy and Pity hath ruined many Souls. The Gospel declares the highest instances and degrees of it in the Redemption of the World by Jesus Christ, and in pardoning our sins upon our Repentance, and to shew this required a wonderful Method and most Stupendious Expedient, thus to find out a way to reconcile God's Justice and Mercy together by the Sacrifice of Christ: Now this utmost Grace and Mercy of Heaven neither does nor could go farther than past Sins upon Repentance and Amendment, Obedience and a good Life afterwards; to expect any Mercy from God beyond this, beyond the Gospel and the Rules and measures of Mercy there layd down is the most vain and groundless and presumptuous thing in the World; and so 'tis for a dying unprepared Sinner to think he can do any thing then by which

he may hope to prevail with Christ, and to enter into Heaven :

For alas, what can he then do? He can use strong Crying and Tears and Prayers to God, so did the Virgins and so may the Damned; but alas, for what can he pray? That God would save him without Obedience and a good Life, which he has declared he never will; that he would not now punish him for a wicked and impenitent and disobedient life, which he assuredly will do; that he may not now be shut out when the Bridegroom is coming, though he is no way prepared for it and has no Oyl in his Lamp, no vertuous habits and Dispositions of mind to fit him to go in, and now 'tis too late to get them all on a sudden, and in vain to expect to borrow this Oyl of others, or to have it given by the Bridegroom himself; would he pray now to God to give him Grace when he has despised and rejected it all his Life; would he now have it grow up into vertuous habits and the fruits of Obedience and a good life all on a sudden; would he now become a new Man and a new Creature in a few hours, and from a wicked Man all his life become a good one in a few days? He may almost as well hope that God should make him young again now he is old, and turn his old and weak and dying Body into a young and lusty and healthful one, and work those mighty Miracles upon his Body as well as his Mind by his Prayers; God can do the one by an Almighty Irresistible power as well as the other, if he pleases,

ses, but 'tis very vain and groundless to depend upon the utmost of what God's power is able to do in any thing, and therefore that is never to be brought in, for or against any thing of this Nature.

The only question is not what God, but what such a wicked Man and dying Sinner can then do : Can he have all his old habits of Vice and Wickedness rooted out, and his Nature changed, and a vertuous and holy disposition of mind planted in their stead ? Can that lust or sinful Inclination which was so hard to be conquered before, that he pretended it was impossible for him almost to leave it ; can this now be so soon and so easily overcome ? All those Corruptions and Diseases of Soul which have been so long upon him that they are become cronical and habitual, and which were before incurable by all the means of Grace and methods of Providence, by all the advices and exhortations of his own Friends and God's Ministers, are these now to be perfectly got off and cured on a sudden, and the Mind restored to Soundness and Holiness ? Is that now to be done so easily and so quickly which he found so hard to do all his life, and which is one of the hardest and most difficult things in the World to make a Bad Man a good one ? No, this is Unnatural and Impossible, and cannot be in the Nature of the thing ; but a Man may be very sorrowful and heartily troubled that he was not so, and have great trouble and remorse of Mind for his sins, and so be heartily penitent

nitent for them. This is all he can be, and he cannot well be otherwise if he be in his Senses and hath the use of his Reason, and sees such Terrible danger before him as is now unavoidable; he must be greatly troubled that he hath brought himself to that, that is, that he must suffer for his Sin, for he was never troubled at the Sin before, nor would be now, but like it and live in it still if that were all; but he cannot but be concerned at the dreadful punishment of it, and he must be very hardy indeed if he go not thus Shivering and Contrite and Penitent as they call it, to his Execution; this is only a Natural abhorring of pain or what is evil to us from a principle of Self-preservation, not an abhorrence of Sin from Choice and Reason and free apprehension of Mind, for all this is from a force and violence offered to the Mind by a sense of present danger, and from that Fear, Terrour, and Confusion that a Sinner is then in; when Hell and Eternity are just presented before him, then he parts with his Sins as a Man does with his Money when he has a Sword or a Pistol held to his Breast, out of mere fear not out of free choice: No Man but must be afraid of Hell who believes it and has any sense of it; And all this dying sorrow and Repentance arises only from hence. Some I know make a mighty difference both as to the Cause and the Vertue and Efficacy of this sorrow; if it arise only from the fear of Hell it is Attrition, if from the Love of God joyned

joyned with it, is Contrition, and so will be more effectual, Now I am afraid the first is the chief spring if not only cause of it in dying Sinners, and that there is no real difference between these two sorts of sorrows in the Nature of the thing, but only an over-nice distinction in words and thoughts, and in considering the same thing by several mental conceptions, when the Passion is the same in it self and the causes of it are not to be so nicely distinguish'd; but whatever be the principle of this sorrow, and however strong and sincere it be, and whatever purposes and resolutions it may be joyned with, yet that this mere mental Repentance is not true and perfect Repentance, such as the Gospel promises Pardon to, I have shewn before in giving the Notion and describing the Nature of Repentance, and particularly proved how short and imperfect this is in the fourth Section of the first Chapter, so that a Dying Sinner cannot then perform such a full Repentance as hath a certain title to Pardon and Salvation by the promises of the Gospel: But to shew further, that a foolish unprepared Dying Sinner can have no hopes of entering into Heaven by all he can then do, and that his most earnest Prayers and Entreaties, his Cries and Sorrows, his Wishes and purposes and Resolutions, and all the Parts of his dying Repentance, put together are not sufficient to do this, as the Parable here supposes, I shall produce some more Positive and Express Proofs, and as I think

think convincing Arguments against this Efficacy and Validity of a Death-Bed Repentance.

S E C T. IV.

More Positive Proofs and Arguments against the validity of a Death-Bed Repentance.

First, It does no way come up to the plain and indispensable Conditions of Salvation required by the Gospel, for those are no other than Faith and Obedience, believing the Gospel and living according to it, which are the plain and only pathway to Heaven by Christianity, and he that thinks of Christ's bringing him thither any other way, abuses his Saviour and his Religion, and puts a wretched cheat upon himself. I know Faith and Repentance, and Faith alone, are often set down as the only Terms and Conditions of Salvation by the Gospel; but then they are to be taken not in a strict and narrow sense, but in a large one, as they include all that belongs and is consequent to them, all that Obedience and new Christian Life which is made as plain a Condition of Salvation by the Gospel as Faith it self, and Repentance, I have shewn plainly takes those in, so that the whole Practical Condition of the Gospel is meant by them. Faith is the first Principle and Foundation of Repentance, Obedience and all

all Christian Vertues, and therefore as including and containing those is made the Condition of our being saved by a *Metonymy* whereby the Cause comprehends also the Effect. Faith does so plainly in Scripture mean not only an assent to another's words, or a trust and affiance in them, but that *which worketh by love, Gal. 5. 5.* and that which produces good Works and is dead without them, that 'tis a strange mistake to make that the Condition of our being justified and saved without Obedience. 'Tis to be observed, and I think it may help to clear this matter, that when Faith and Believing is made the only Condition of being saved, and nothing else is mentioned, this is always spoken to those *Jews* or Heathens who were not yet Christians and Believers, and the only way for them to be saved was to believe and embrace Christianity and become Disciples of Christ: As when Christ says, *John 3. 15. Whosoever believeth on the Son of Man shall not perish but have everlasting Life*; This is spoken to *Nicodemus*, who then exprest his disbelief of Christ's words, and was not brought fully to believe in him though he was disposed to it. So *John 6. 40.* when Christ saith, *This is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son and believeth on him may have everlasting life*: This is spoken to the *Jews* who murmured at Christ and were far from believing in him. And so Christ bid the Apostles preach this to the unbelieving World, *Whosoever believeth and is baptized shall be saved, Matth. 16. 16. i. e. believing and*
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professing Christianity puts them into a salvable state, and if they live according to this Faith they shall certainly be saved. As if we should say to a Person who desires to know how he may be a Scholar; Go to School or to the University; This would put him into a certain way to Learning; but he must not only be enter'd and enroll'd and matriculated there, but must study and read and do such things as belong to a Scholar. When St. Peter advised the Jews who were pricked to the heart, *Acts* 2. 37. and St. Paul, the Jaylor when he ask'd *what must I do to be saved*, that they should *believe in Christ and repent*, They meant thereby turn Christians, which would put them into a salvable state; but then they must perform all the other things which belong to Christians as well as have this Faith, or else they would lose and forfeit this their good state. When Christ therefore speaks to his Disciples who already believed in him, and St. Paul writes to those who were Christians and Believers, they tell them not only of Faith, which is the first Christian Vertue and the root of all the rest, but of Obedience and of all good Works, of living *as becometh the Gospel*, and adorning their Profession with all manner of Vertues which they make as necessary to Salvation as Faith it self: Thus if ye keep my commandments, saith Christ, ye shall abide in my love, *John* 15. 20. And ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you, ver. 14. And not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he

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that doth the will of my Father which is in Heaven, Mat. 7. 21. If ye know these things happy are ye if ye do them, John 13, 17. So St. Paul to the Corinthians, Circumcision is nothing, nor uncircumcision, but keeping the Commandments of God, 1 Cor. 7. 19. And to the Galatians, In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature, Gal. 6. 15. For by the gospel the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness, Rom. 1. 18. And when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with his mighty Angels, he will take vengeance on all them that obey not his gospel, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, 2 Thess. 1. 8, 9. And those Christians who do any such works of the Flesh as are mentioned Gal. 5. 19, 21. shall not inherit the Kingdom of God, but for the sake of those the wrath of God cometh on the Children of disobedience, Colos. 3. 6. These things are as clear as if they were writ with a Sun-beam, so that none, one would think, who reads the Gospel should suppose Faith alone without Obedience should justify and save us, or that Christ is a Saviour to any but those who obey him, Heb. 9. 9. since blessed are they who do his commandments, for they only have right to the tree of life, Rev. 22. 14. From all which it is plain, that Obedience to the Laws of the Gospel is the only and the indispensable Condition of our Salvation.

And indeed this is the very design of Christ's giving us such excellent Laws, that
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we should obey them and be happy for ever by doing so; and if we do not, but live wickedly, we must be eternally miserable. It had been in vain for God to have given us any Laws, or commanded us any thing, if he had not given them such a Sanction, and obliged us to them by such Rewards, and Penalties, and therefore if Mensheads were not bewildred with odd schemes and disputes about decrees and strange methods of Salvation, this would be the first and plainest Principle in all Religion as 'tis the truest, and there would never be any dispute about it, that if Men live well here, they shall be for ever happy; if ill, for ever miserable. However ignorant Men call this a Legal Condition of Salvation, and would have no such in the Gospel, yet as I have shewn Christianity requires it, so does also the very Nature of Religion and of Divine Government, and the belief of a Future Judgment and of Rewards and Punishments in another World do all suppose it: For what are those Rewards for but for those who live Vertuously, and those Punishments but for those who live Wickedly? And what is a Future Judgment but to reward all Men according to their works? where God as a Just and Impartial Judge shall without respect of persons judge according to every mans work, 1 Pet. 1: 17. And every one shall receive the things done in his body according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad, 2 Cor. 5. 10. For when the Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father

Father with his Angels, then he shall reward every man according to his works, Matth. 16. 27. In the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, he will render to every man according to his deeds, Rom. 2. 6. To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory, and honour, and immortality; eternal life: But unto them that obey not the truth but obey unrighteousness, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil, ver. 8, 9. Nothing can be plainer than this in the whole Gospel, that Men must expect to receive hereafter according to the goodness or badness of their Lives here, and that the only Condition of their Salvation is Obedience to the Laws of the Gospel. 'Tis a wretched misunderstanding and a total destroying of Christianity, to set up any loose Principles of Faith and Free-Grace, or the like, which are not consistent with this, and to delude our selves with hopes of Salvation by Christ upon any other Condition or by any other Means than this of Obedience.

God indeed hath granted us this favour and privilege by the Gospel, that though we have disobeyed him some time and some part of our lives, yet if we come off from this Disobedience and return to our Duty in time, and perform Obedience to him for the future, that then he will forgive our former Disobedience and not charge it upon us nor punish us for it, but graciously pardon it for the sake of Christ and his meritorious sufferings, and that he will receive us again into his favour and reward us for our new Obedience

dience as if we had never done otherwise, but had been always obedient and *never transgressed his Commandments*. This is the great grace and favour and privilege of the Gospel, and this is what we call Repentance, for Repentance is the same thing with Obedience, only it comes after Disobedience; 'tis a Man's living well after he has lived otherwise, which takes in Obedience and a good Life, though after a bad one; 'tis like a Man's setting up again after he had once broke, when after his kind Creditor has been pleased to compound with him, and instead of his whole Debt, *to wit*, an entire and Universal Obedience all his Life, to accept of such a partial and broken one, he may again thrive and grow rich, and so get free from his former poverty: Or as I have often represented the Nature of Repentance, 'tis like a Man's recovering health and strength and soundness of body after he has been weak and ill or dis-tempered in the whole or any part; Health and Strength is the same to him that it was before, though he had once lost it, as Riches is to the other now he hath got them again after he was broke; so 'tis the same vertue of Mind which we ought always to have had that Repentance restores us to, and 'tis the same Obedience to God's Laws which a Penitent performs upon his return to his duty that he should have performed before, and 'tis this only that commends him to God and gives him a Title to the promises of the Gospel and procures Pardon and Salvation to him.

'Tis God's infinite Mercy in and through Christ to allow and accept of this *After* Obedience as the Condition of our Salvation when it is so broken and interrupted, whereas the whole Obedience of our Lives is due to God, and he might refuse to accept of this lame and after, and imperfect one; but still 'tis Obedience to God's Laws after we have broken them by our sins, 'tis this Obedience renewed, *ex postliminio* as I may call it, that recommends us to his favour, obtains our Pardon for what is past, and entitles us again to the reward we had forfeited, and without this we can never be reconciled to God nor received into Heaven; for none shall go thither but the Vertuous and Obedient, whether they have always been so, or only after they have been otherwise; but still they must be Vertuous, and they must be Obedient, or else they can never come thither, for 'tis certain Obedience, which if after Disobedience in any instance is call'd Repentance, is by the Gospel the absolute and indispensable Condition of our Happiness and Salvation.

Now no Man can in any sense call the Sorrows and Remorses and Repentance of dying Sinners Gospel Obedience, but only a trouble and concern for the want of it, and for the disobedience of their whole lives; There would be no difference between Obedience and Disobedience if this were so; No Master or Father would account him an Obedient Servant or Obedient Son who should only confess and be sorry that he had always

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disobeyed him until upon this his sorrow he shewed himself Obedient for the future, and did him some faithful Service. How long a Man must be Obedient after he hath been Disobedient, or how long time is required for a Sinner who repents to come off from his Sins and become a good Man is hard to determine exactly, but there must be so much time as shall make a Drunkard sober, a Whoremonger chaste, an unjust Man Righteous, a Swearer and Profane Person Devout and Pious, the Covetous Man Just and Charitable, and the like; for we are assured that whilst Men are such Sinners as any of those, *they have no inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ, and of God, Ephes. 5. 5.* and therefore they must so long obey the Laws of God till they are truly become and may be denominated Sober, Just, Charitable, Pure, Holy, Religious and the like, for Heaven is a place only for such Men and such Souls as are thus qualified, and who have obeyed God's Laws so long till they are become thus; It shall never be given to those who have been disobedient to God all their lives and can now perform no acts of Obedience to him, such can never perform that Indispensable Condition of Salvation required by the Gospel, and nothing less than this will do; there is no such disjunctive any where in the Bible that I know of to this sense, Be Holy and Obedient and lead a Good Life in order to be Eternally happy, or else Repent and be Sorry for not doing it when you come to dye; but only thus; Where you have sinned and been disobedient

disobedient for the time past, Repent and be Obedient for the time to come, and this shall be accepted, as in that known place, *when the wicked Man turneth away from his Wickedness which he hath committed, and doth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his Soul alive, Ezek. 18. 27.* 'Tis his doing that which is lawful and right, i. e. his Obedience for the future, shall save his Soul alive; all his transgressions that he hath committed they shall not be mentioned unto him upon his new Obedience or Repentance; in his Righteousness that he hath done shall he live, ver. 22. it must be Righteousness afterwards, or his obeying God after his former disobedience shall entitle him to Life and Happiness, and be the Condition of it.

2. As Obedience is the only term and Condition of our Salvation by the Gospel, so there is no just reason or good ground to hope that God will in any case abate of the terms of Salvation he hath there lay'd down, or be Merciful beyond those, for two reasons.

1. Because this would neither be consistent with the Holiness of his Nature, nor the Wisdom of his Government; for as he is a Holy and Righteous God he cannot love any but a righteous and good Soul, and so cannot make any other happy, because a wicked and impure Soul is contrary to his Nature and what he hates and abominates, and what can never see or enjoy God; neither is it consistent with the Wisdom of God as Governour of the World to reward any but the obedient and the righteous, for it would

reflect upon his Justice and his Authority if he should suffer Men to go on in their Wickedness and Disobedience all their lives, and not punish them for it. Mercy indeed and Clemency is the Honour of any Prince and that which commends him to the love and esteem of all; but then it must be shewn wisely to proper and fit Objects and for good Reasons to bring Men into their Duty, and draw them off from their Disobedience with the promise of a Pardon upon their doing so, and returning to their Allegiance: But if a Prince shall grant this to all sort of Offenders out of the weakness and softness of his Temper, he will loosen his Government, and weaken his Authority, and make himself cheap and contemptible; and as he will encourage Rogues and Rebels, so he will injure the Publick, and not take due care as becomes a wise Governour of the Common good. Should God grant a full and absolute pardon to Sinners who have lived never so long in their sins because they are very sorry for them when they come to dye, and they can live in them no longer, this would encourage Men who love their Sins to continue in 'em all their lives and then Repent at last, and so save themselves the trouble, as they think it, of living a very good life. God indeed has promised pardon to all who repent and turn from their sins, and live good and holy lives after they have lived bad ones, and this is sufficient encouragement to make a wicked Man become a
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good one with the certain hopes that when he does so God will receive him; but to go farther and suppose God to pardon a long wicked life spent altogether in Sin and Disobedience merely for a little sorrow and remorse and trouble when Men come to dye, is to open a wide Door to vice and wickedness, and to supersede the necessity of Obedience and a good life; and therefore should God grant this, it would destroy Religion, and take off the Obligations to Vertue, and make all his Motives to Obedience and Threatnings against Sin to be void, empty and ineffectual.

2. There is no Reason to think God will abate of the terms of the Gospel, and be more merciful than he has there promised to be, because as the Gospel seems to contain the utmost Grace and Mercy that God can shew to Men, so it shall certainly be the Rule of the last Judgment; and God will then proceed and pronounce judgment according to the Rules and Measures of that; 'tis the most vain and impudent thing in the World to expect any further Mercy than God has revealed to us by Jesus Christ: He hath in all probability shewn the utmost kindness and favour that is possible to Mankind for his sake; he has opened the bowels of his Mercy and *the Riches of his Grace*, as the Apostle speaks, *Eph. 1. 7.* and has exhausted all the treasures of Love, and compassion to poor Sinners, that a Wise and Just God can possibly shew with consistence to his own Honour, and the Honour of his Laws, and

Government to expect therefore that God should be gracious beyond the Gospel, and make farther and greater abatements to us, and be more merciful than he hath promised to be by his Son whom he sent with the most full and gracious Message of loving kindness that we could reasonably desire or God in wisdom grant, is a most groundless and unreasonable presumption, which makes void all God's threatnings and is a direct disbelief of his word, and expressly contrary to what is plainly declared by the Gospel itself; for in that Christ assures us that *the word which he has there spoken, the same shall judge men at the last day*, John 12. 48. And therefore he will judge us by no other rule, nor use any other measures in disposing his Mercy or his Justice to his Creatures than what he hath layd down, and made known to us by the Gospel; *God shall Judge the world*, says St. Paul, *in that day according to my Gospel*, Rom. 2. 16. 'Tis not therefore to be expected that God should use any other Judgment or shew any other Mercy to Sinners than what is according to the terms of the Gospel and the Conditions of Salvation there lay'd down, and a Death-Bed Repentance doth not as I have shewn come up to those.

3. I have shewed all along this Discourse that it is not such a True and Perfect Repentance as the Scripture promises Pardon and Salvation to; for that consists not only in sorrow and trouble of Mind, conviction of Soul, and Compunction of heart, but in
actual

actual Reformation and new Obedience; and indeed 'tis this alone is a Man's retracting his past folly and wickedness and being wiser for the future, undoing all the evil he has done as much as he can, and doing all the good he can for the time to come, and so making all possible amends to the honour of Religion, and the honour of God which have been highly injured and violated by him; and though he can never make perfect reparation and satisfaction to them, and therefore Christ alone did this by his Death and Sufferings, yet he is to do all that he is able and that is in his power to do, he may thereby vindicate the Divine Authority and Government which he hath opposed and resisted, and justifie the wisdom and goodness, justice and holiness of the Laws of Heaven which he hath broken and contemned, and so make all the compensation he is able to repair the sad Mischief he hath done by his Sins. We truly say, that no injury to another person will be forgiven but upon Restitution and making all the reparation for it that can be, because 'till this is done the sin remains and the evil effects of it continue, and till a Man is willing to undo that as far as he is able, to take away and destroy all the effects of it, he keeps the sin and does not truly Repent of it, nor wish it undone; now surely we owe as much to God and Religion in Justice as we do to our Equals; and where we have done any thing to injure those, as our sins are the greatest injury to them we can be guilty of, there also we must make as much

restitution and reparation as we are able, and undoe the sins we have committed by a more zealous and hearty and new Obedience, and making up, if it were possible, the past failures and defects of our Sinful Lives by greater care and zeal and diligence for the future. We may do this by a timely Repentance, but by a late and a dying one we cannot.

4. A Sinner cannot be then freed at his Death from what will necessarily make him miserable, his Sinful Habits, which will sink his Soul into Hell by a Natural Causality as well as Divine Judgment: God has expressly declared that *neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, nor such like shall inherit the Kingdom of God*, 1 Cor. 6. 9, 10. And who are such but they who have Lived in the habit of any of those Sins? And are therefore to be denominated and accounted such from the general practice of their Lives, and have not *been washed and sanctified*, or made better, but only are now sorry for being so when they are dying: If Sorrow would make Men to be otherwise, and their Tears alone would blot out this black Character without, a contrary Practice, there would hardly be any such to be found, though 'tis plain the World is too full of them. There would be no Thief or Felon or Traytor at any Assizes or Court of Judicature, if when they came to be tryed, and were found guilty, and were to be condemned, their meer sorrow and

and trouble would set them right, and change their character, and make them to be accounted otherwise in the eye of the Law. But besides this Sentence and Judgment of God upon all kind of Sinners whereby he bars any such from Heaven, and adjudges them to Hell, their Sins naturally sink them thither; for that is the true place and center of Wickedness, and therefore of Misery. Filthy and impure Minds fall into it, by a kind of Spiritual Gravitation, or by a such Constitution of the Spiritual and Intellectual World, which as necessarily carries them thither as the Mechanism of this material World carries a stone downward. So that 'tis as unavoidable for a Sinner loaded with his wicked Habits to fall into Hell and Misery in another World, as if here he had a Millstone tyed about his neck, and were cast into the Sea to fall to the bottom of it. The weight of his Sins will of it self press and sink him down into the utmost gulph of Misery; and when he is quite taken away from the diversions and pleasures and bodily enjoyments of this World, and is left wholly to the reflections and agonies and dismal apprehensions of his own Mind, his Conscience which is now stupified and amused with other imaginary pleasures of Body and this World, will then awaken and fall upon him with all its rage, and torment his Soul and make it unexpressibly miserable were there no other sentence or judgment upon him. The dreadful horrors and apprehensions of his own Mind let loose

loose upon him would always be a very great torment and Hell to him, if he had nothing to relieve or divert him, but was left naked and open to the full stroke of his Conscience, and his thoughts were wholly taken up with the frightful Images and Ideas of his own Guilt, and overwhelmed with all the bitter Passions of Fear, Sorrow and Despair, as they will hereafter. Sin will as certainly fill him with those in another World, and cause such painful sensations or perceptions within his Soul as he now feels in his Body upon a torturing Disease, or any instrument of Cruelty applied to it; for *that* is as contrary to the Nature and Frame of the one as those are to the other, and they would be always felt here if the Body did not drown and stifle and choak the free and natural thoughts of the Mind, which it cannot hereafter. If the Mind therefore be not freed from its Sins and Evil Habits it will necessarily be miserable with them in another World. It can sometimes avoid those inward pains and torments here, because it has the gratifications of its Sins, and other enjoyments and entertainments to bear it up, and yet they will often get in and disturb it even amidst all its pleasures and jollities; but in its separate Estate hereafter it will be wholly without those, and so for ever subject to the inward misery and uneasiness which Sin ever causes in its own thoughts.

5. Allowing Salvation to a meer dying Repentance, as it seems contrary to all plain
Notions

Notions and certain Principles in Religion, namely, that none but Vertuous and good Men can go to Heaven, and that Obedience and a good Life is the only way thither, and that Vice while it continues upon the Mind will necessarily make it miserable, and the like, which I have largely insisted upon. So,

Lastly, The consequences of it seem plainly to destroy all Religion. For,

1. It sets by all those general commands which are often given to Christians, of Walking worthy of their vocation, adorning their profession, and letting their conversation be as it becometh the Gospel. Letting their light so shine before Men that others may see their good works, and so glorifie their Father which is in Heaven. Doing all to the Glory of God, and promoting that and Religion as much and as far as they can in the World, Learning of Christ and following his Example, and shewing they are his Disciples by bearing much fruit; Doing all the good they can to others, and being useful in their places, improving their Talents, and not being unprofitable Servants, Redeeming the time, and taking all opportunities of serving the great ends of Religion, Growing in Grace and being perfect, *as their Father which is in Heaven is perfect.* These are general Commands given to Christians, and such as they are all obliged to, though not in the highest degrees yet in such measures as God who knows our frame and our circumstances intended we should come up to. They

They are not only Counsels of Perfection, and Romantick unpracticable Directions of some Acts of Supererogation, but they are strict Rules of necessary Duty and Christian practice which every good Christian is bound to live up to, and if they wholly fail in doing so, and do no way make them good in their Lives, but act contrary to them, they are not good Christians at present nor shall be rewarded as such hereafter, but shall be condemned and punished eternally for being otherwise. Now a notorious wretched Sinner who hath been so far from having any regard to these Christian Obligations that he hath lived all his Life in direct opposition against them, and now only Repents when he is a dying, he must be wholly excused from all these, they must be all set aside and signifie nothing in his case if he can go to Heaven not only without observing them in any sort or any tolerable manner, but living wholly opposite and reverse to them; for he instead of adorning his Profession, and letting his Conversation be such as becometh the Gospel, hath been the greatest shame and reproach to it, and been unworthy the name of it; and shall he now then share in the noblest rewards of it? Instead of letting his Light shine before Men he hath been an example of the greatest Wickedness, and dishonoured God in the highest manner of all his days, and shall he now be rewarded and honoured by him? Instead of learning of Christ and living up to the
example

example he set us, he hath learn'd of the Devil, and liv'd like a Bruit, and practis'd all sort of Diabolical and Bestial Wickedness, and shall he now reign with Christ and be taken up into Paradise with him? Instead of doing any good, he hath done all the mischief imaginable in corrupting and debauching others, and tempting them to all manner of lewdness, and instead of promoting Religion he hath served the cause of Atheism and Irreligion, and done all he can to make others disbelieve the truth of all Religion, if not by lewd Principles yet by lewd Practices that are the greatest contradiction to it; and shall he now partake of its Glorious Promises which he hardly believed and would never seek after all his Life? Instead of improving his Talents in his Master's Service he hath wholly wasted and consumed them in Luxury and Prodigality, and spent all the Blessings God had intrusted him with, to quite other purposes than he gave them. Instead of growing in Grace he hath grown to the utmost perfection almost of Sin and Wickedness, and is become a Sinner of the highest rate, and hath daily improved in it. Instead of Redeeming the time he hath squandered it all away in folly and madness, and took all opportunities to gratifie his Lusts, and spent his whole Life in the pursuit of sinful pleasures, and now indeed he would redeem the time in a wonderful manner, and do all the business of Life very compendiously and very concisely in a few days or hours.

hours before he is to dye: And when he hath followed none of these Christian Rules and Directions, but acted altogether against them, yet he would have God set them all by, and make them all have no meaning, or be to no purpose, but only a little dying Sorrow and Repentance to serve instead of all of them.

2. As those general Commands must be set aside by this privilege of a dying Repentance, so must also those particular Commands which oblige us to the practice of several Vertues, such as Piety and Devotion, Sobriety and Temperance, Purity and Chastity, Self-denial, Heavenly-mindedness, overcoming the World, governing our Passions and Appetites, mortifying the Flesh with the Affections and Lusts, and the like: For 'tis too late sure to begin to practise those when a Man is just upon dying, if he has neglected it all his Life. Shall he begin then to mortifie the Flesh which he hath gratified always before with the most unlawful Lusts and forbidden Pleasures? But now Sicknes mortifies it indeed, and Death will do so something more, and he would have this Vertue as much in his Coffin or his Grave, when he lyes cold there, as he can pretend to it now; his Lusts do then dye with his Body, as a Candle goes out when all the nourishment is spent that should maintain it. Is he now to govern his Passions and Appetites when both the causes and the Objects of them are removed? Is he to provide against the heat of the Sun when it is just Night or Winter with him, and make a bank to stop the current when the
water

water is all dried up ? Is he to overcome the World when he is leaving it, with an odd sort of *Parthian* victory ? Is he then to be Heavenly minded when he never minded Heaven before ; but now 'tis the next thing when he can mind the Earth no longer. Is he then to practise Self-denyal when he never denyed himself any Worldly Interest or Sensual Pleasure before on the score of Religion, and now he denies those and his Life both alike, because he cannot keep them ? Is he now to begin to practise the Vertues of Chastity and Temperance and Sobriety, which he never did before ? then he hath put them off to a very convenient season when his Vices have quite left him, and so if Vertues will come of themselves like Guests uninvited, there is no other company to hinder them, but he was as vertuous and sober almost half his Life, I mean when he was asleep, as he can be now when he is as incapable of the contrary acts as he was then ; and only is like the Enthusiast, cured of seeing vanity when he lost his Eyes, but perhaps not of being vain, for the ghosts and spirits of his departed Sins may still haunt and possess him. If these Christian Vertues are necessary to be practised in order to our Eternal Salvation, a dying Repentance cannot be sufficient without them ; if it be, then those particular Precepts and Commands must be set aside by it, as well as the other general ones I mentioned ; for 'tis certain he can no more practise these Vertues now than he could in his Mothers Womb

Womb, and they might be as well infused into him then as they can be now without any practice, and something better, because there were then no contrary Habits to hinder them: But the Doctrine of infused Habits is like the Hypothesis of Transfusion of Blood, contrary to Nature and Experience; and the dying Man may as well depend upon one for his Body as the other for his Soul.

3. The salvability and sufficiency of a meer dying Repentance as it sets by and discharges us from all those general and particular Commands of Christianity, so also from the whole Christianity engagement and Baptismal Covenant: For can that then be any way made good or performed in any measure when a Man has violated it all his Life, and notoriously broken it in all the parts that belong to it? Can he then sufficiently renounce the Devil and all his works, when he hath hitherto complied with them? The pomps and vanities of this wicked World, when he has minded nothing else? and the sinful Lusts of the Flesh, when he has followed them and been led by them all his days? Can he then keep God's Commandments, who hath broken most of them? and walk in the same all the days of his Life, who hath walked all his days in the ways of Sin and the paths of Unrighteousness, and never left them till just now he is at his journeys end and can live no longer? Surely this Baptismal Covenant is made only *pro forma* and is but a modish and mannerly Ceremony at our entring into Christianity, if we are not more obliged to stand to it and make it good
and

and expect the Benefits of Christianity upon our so doing, in some further and better manner of performance than a wicked Christian can do when he comes to dye? If his meer Sorrows and Purposes and Resolutions will serve instead of all that is expressly or implicitly meant by it, it is void and null in all other parts of it, and the Church has unfaithfully and unsincerely drawn it up in other words of a different sense and meaning that signifie nothing, and the Scripture hath expressed it as odly and unfitly when it speaks of our dying to Sin and rising unto Righteousness by our Baptism, *That we are symbolically buried with Christ by Baptism unto death, that like as Christ was raised up by the glory of the Father even so we also should walk in newness of life,* Rom. 6. 4. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection. Knowing this that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin; for he that is dead is free from sin, ver. 5, 6, 7. Likewise reckon ye also your selves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord, ver. 11. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof: Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but yield your selves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God, ver. 12, 13. Here is enough to give us the plain meaning of Baptism, and the great obligation of it to re-

nounce Sin and live a good and holy Life. And we are then said to put on Christ, and to put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness, Eph. 4. 24. and to put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, ver. 22. and to be regenerated and born again, and have a Spiritual Principle of Life and Holiness communicated to our Souls, and we then voluntarily consent to the terms of Christianity, and solemnly engage and undertake to live according to them : Now all this which is very great and very obliging, one would think, is made very little and very easily took off and abated and dispensed with, if when it has been utterly neglected and disregarded, violated and broken all our lives, a meer short and Dying Repentance will make it up and supply all the failures and the whole non-performance of it. I own that true and timely Repentance will relieve us against the many failures and breaches of it by bringing us to perform it better afterwards, sincerely endeavouring to make it good when we have broken it by any wilful sin, and upon our performance of it, though not with perfect exactness yet with sincere integrity depends our Title to all the Privileges of Christianity. But now to have no regard to it, or take any care to observe it, nor make it any way good in our lives, but to live loosely and wickedly as if we had no such strict Engagement and Obligation upon us, and to allow our selves in notorious Sins and unlawful Liberties expressly contrary to our

our Baptifmal Covenant, and yet think to falve all and have the whole benefit of it by a fhort Sorrow and Repentance when we come to dye, this is either to make it have no meaning at all, or that we are not obliged to the performance of it; but let us not deceive our felves; whofoever doth not make good his Baptifmal Covenant in his Life, which a wicked Man cannot at his Death, as he is falfe to Chrift and breaks his own moft folemn and voluntary engagements, fo he forfeits all the benefits of his Chriftianity, all that Pardon and Salvation which Chrift hath purchafed and propofed to him.

Thus all the Obligations to Chriftian Holinefs and Obedience layed upon us, either by our own Baptifmal Vows and Promifes, or by the particular or general Commands of God and our Saviour are all taken away and diffolved by this loofe Doctrine of a Death-Bed Repentance being fufficient for Salvation; fo far as this is allowed in the cafe of one who hath been a great Sinner all his life, fo far there muft be an exception to all thofe, and they muft all ftand by and be fet afide to make room for his going to Heaven. All the Laws of Religion and the whole Conftitution of Chriftianity, and all the ordinary Rules and the ftanding Method of Salvation by the Gofpel muft be paff by and over-ruled to make way for fuch an Extraordinary Prefident; and whether God will do this is to me no more a queftion than whether he will releafe the Devils and the Damned out of Hell: I think

there is scarce any more ground or more reason to hope for one than the other, and that 'tis as much a limiting the Divine Grace and Mercy and Confining God's Extraordinary Power of shewing Mercy where he pleases, and denying his Infinite Pity and Compassion to his Creatures, and entring into his unfearchable Councils, and diving into his unfathomable Judgment, to deny the latter as the former.

If God in one case may act contrary to all Rules and to his own Threatnings Judgment and Sentence pronounced against Sinners, he may do so, so far as I know by the same Extraordinary Mercy and unbounded Prerogative in the other.

But what shall we say then to such a wretched Sinner when he is a dying, and never repented till he was so; is his case hopeless and desperate? Is there no comfort to be given him, is this hard and cruel Sentence to be pronounced upon him; and is he to be thus tormented before his time? Can nothing be done or said to him to give him any manner of hopes and comfort, and is he to be cast into the deepest gulph of despair? What a Miserable Comforter must a Minister whom he then sends for, be to him who is of this Opinion, and talks at this rate? What will all his Prayers and Tears and strong Cryes then signifie, if they can do him no good to the saving of his Soul?

1 Answer, the case is I confess very sad, and I know not what to say to it: I dare not

not pervert the Gospel to give him false comfort, I must not be unfaithful to the great God and my blessed Redeemer whose Minister I am, in saying, *Peace Peace, when there is no Peace*, in loosing what is bound in Heaven, and by a false Key or Picklock rather, pretend to open the Kingdom of Heaven when God has shut it: I must not by any sweet and poysonous Opiates give a short and stupifying ease to his mind, and put him into a secure sleep till he awakes in his sad mistake and *lifts up his eyes being in torments*: I must not corrupt Religion, and sow Pillows under his Armholes to put him into a state of false Doctrines and Narcotick Principles of Divinity; take away his pains for a moment, and give him hopes contrary to the Gospel; *I must not lye for God*, much less against him, and bring a pretended Message from him to such a poor Wretch, which he never sent me with, and forge a Counterfeit Pardon for him, which Christ or the Gospel has not signed, only to chear and delude him for a few hours. I must not, I dare not then say any thing contrary to the Truth or to this Doctrine, which I believe to be such, to deceive him or others. It may not be then so seasonable, nor am I bound at that time to preach this to him, as I do now to the living, that they may never come to this sad Condition, but may take care to prevent it by a timely Repentance and a good Life: I would not for the Ten Thousand

land Worlds be in that lamentable Case; and I here warn every one that Reads this, in the Name of God to avoid it: *Psalm 100*

But what then shall such an one do? Shall he not pray, shall he not cry mightily to God, shall he not lament and mourn and be deeply sorrowful and penitent? Yes, by all means as much as is possible, and should be directed advised and assisted to do this by the Minister and his Friends and all about him; but what will it signifie according to the former Doctrine? 'Twill not save his Soul or get him Heaven. I answer, I cannot say it will, nor can any Minister assure him of this; but it will abate his misery, and lessen his torments, and be a great mitigation to his future punishment; it will, though not obtain a pardon for all the sins of his wicked life, yet lighten his Sentence in some measure, and make his sufferings to be something less than they would otherwise be.

There are many degrees of Torment and Punishment even in Hell it self, as there are of Glory and Happiness in Heaven; as there are many *Mansions* above in our Fathers House, so there are many Cells in the Infernal Prison, and some are *beaten* there with more *strips* and more intense torments than others. The fire of Hell is kindled seven times hotter for some more profligate and daring and presumptuous Sinners, and especially for those who despise Heaven, and with their last breath deny or affront God, and openly scorn and disown Religion;
such

such bold Heectors against Heaven who stand out to the last against it, and shew no signs of Sorrow or Religion, but brave Hell and Death; these provoke God to the utmost, and challenge him as it were to do his worst, and they shall terribly feel this weight of his Power, and the force of his Almighty Arm, and the Effects of his most incensed and provoked Anger: But now a Penitent and fearful and sorrowful Sinner who trembles at God's Judgments, and is afraid of his indignation, and laments over his Sins, and humbles himself under his hand, and Repents as well as he can, and bitterly grieves for his Sins, and owns God is just and righteous in punishing him, and that 'tis the due desert of his ways, and confesses them before Men, and warns others from them, and does all he can to undoe them and make reparation for them, and thus owns Religion, though he has before denyed and opposed it, and gives Glory to God though he before dishonoured and disobeyed him in his life, such an one though for the reasons before given he has not a sufficient Title nor sufficient Qualifications for Heaven, because he has not performed the Condition on which 'tis promised, nor can acquire the Vertuous Habits that can alone fit him for it, nor can come up to the full terms on which God has promised Pardon and Salvation, and all this dying Repentance is not enough to make him a truly good Man, nor beget in him that holiness without which he shall never see God, nor root out those old sinful Acts and

Habits that will condemn and make him miserable, yet he shall have a very great Abatement and Mitigation to his future Misery, and his Punishment shall be much lessened by it : This is a very great thing if we duely consider it, and worth all his most earnest Prayers and deepest Sorrow and Compunction, and all he can do to save him from those highest and extremest degrees of Misery.

Hell indeed is a general word for future Misery in Scripture, as Heaven is for Happiness; but they consist not in one and the same indivisible thing, but are Two States of very various and different and unequal degrees according to the Deserts and Capacities of those who are in them. As there are several degrees of Good and Bad Men here upon Earth, so there will be of happy and miserable Souls in Heaven and Hell; some are very imperfectly but yet sincerely good, and are far from such Obedience and perfection as Human Nature might come up to, and those being without any wilful and deliberate and great Sin shall be in the lowest place in Heaven, and lower than this the Scripture allows none to go thither: They who live in any such one known and habitual sin and wickedness are such Sinners as are expressly excluded from thence. They have another place and state allotted to them in the other World; for there being no third or middle state revealed by Scripture but only those two of Heaven and Hell, they must necessarily go to the latter, and there

there according to the Nature or Quality or Degrees of their Sin, *be punisht with many or fewer stripes*, and be in a state of greater or lesser Misery according as their Lives and their Deserts have been.

The Valley of *Hinnom*, from whence comes *Gehenna*, which we translate Hell, was a deep Valley near *Hierusalem*, where the *Canaanites* burnt their Children alive to *Moloch*, and used all direful noises to hinder their cries and lamentations from being heard; and afterwards the *Jews* say that *Josias* turned it into the place of publick Executions, and that all Carcasses and Dung and filthy things were thrown there, to prevent the noysomness of which there was a perpetual fire always burning in that place that was never put out at any time: The Scripture has made this the chiefeest image and representation of Hell, and from thence describes the Misery of it by fire and burnings, which give one of the most general and sensible ideas of Pain and Torment. Both the Spiritual Happiness of Heaven and Misery of Hell must be thus represented to the gross Thoughts of Mankind by the most delightful and most painful things known to their Senses, that they are best acquainted with in this World, and which will make the strongest impression upon them, though they may be in themselves of another Nature, fitted chiefly to the Souls and Spirits and Rational Faculties of Men in their separate state; and the Happiness or Misery of those is chiefly designed by them. God we know

is a *Consuming fire* to the wicked, but he will very differently punish them: Though fire seems to carry one equal Idea of pain and torment, yet as our Saviour says, that it *shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gormorrah in the day of Judgment*, (and they are set forth for an example in Scripture, *suffering the vengeance of eternal fire, Jude 7.*) then for that City who rejected the Gospel, *Matth. 10. 15.* so it shall be more tolerable for such wicked Men who have been so in a lesser degree in their Lives, and at their Deaths have been as penitent as they could be, than for Sinners of an higher order and a more daring and impenitent sort.

Heaven and Hell being taken for Places rather than States, seem to our Imaginations to imply and signifie one equal and indivisible perfect and complete and same Idea of Happiness or Misery that shall belong to all alike who are sentenced to either of those; but there are very great Differences and Degrees in them, a thousand times more than there is in the different States of Happiness or Misery among Men in this World, where in the same place and upon the same Globe we see some in very happy circumstances and mighty enjoyments, others in great Pain and Misery and a most pitiable Condition; this here is only a Tryal of them, and not according to their deserts; but it shall be so exactly in another World, the great day of Recompence and Retribution; Then they who have done most Evil and committed most sins and not re-
 pent

pented of them in time, but gon on to provoke and disobey God, and despise and neglect Religion all their lives, these shall suffer the sad and utmost Vengeance of God's Anger and of Eternal fire. All other wicked Men of what sort soever, whether they were *Sinners above others*, or only lived in some sins without Repentance and Amendment, these shall be for ever in a very bad state, a state of Misery and loss of true Happiness, and their Misery shall be exactly proportioned to their sins, and be in the same degrees and measures that those were, which are all known to the infinitely wise and Just God, who *without respect of Persons will then render to all according to their works*, and with an equal and impartial Justice distribute those Rewards and Punishments to them.

They then who have served God best in their lives, shall be best rewarded by him; *they who have suffered with Christ shall then reign with him*; they who endured any afflictions for his sake and the Gospel's shall have the greater Glory which *those are not to be compared to*; they shall receive a hundred-fold for all they have done or suffered for Christ; not only for suffering Persecution, though Martyrdom has always had a brighter and a weightier Crown assigned to it, but for denying any present Interest or worldly gain, or unlawful pleasure and sensual Inclination for the sake of Vertue and Religion: Then those who have best improved their Talents to God's Glory, and the good of others, and the Service of Religion, shall have more gifts

gifts and rewards from their great Lord ; *they who have turned many unto Righteousness shall shine as the stars in Glory*, in several Orbs and different degrees of Lustre ; for as the Apostle says, *one star differeth from another in Glory*, 1 Cor. 15. 41. and So likewise shall it be at the Resurrection and in another World, there shall be different degrees of Happiness and Glory for Good Men both in their Bodies and Souls according to their different degrees of Goodness, Service and Obedience to God in this life.

There being but two places, or rather two States in another World, appointed for all rational beings that ever were created, as seems plain by the Scripture Revelation, where so far as it describes or gives us a Map of that Invisible and unknown World, it divides it only into two Mighty Kingdoms or vast Regions, an upper and a lower, parted from one another by unknown bounds and inhabited by Good and Bad Spirits, where the one are very happy and the other very miserable, there being but two such Receptacles for the Souls of all Men and Angels to spend an Eternity in, (for the fixt continuance and Eternal Duration of their state is more plainly revealed than their particular State and Condition) so that all Rational Souls must be consigned to one of those States and Places, (for they who have made a Third or Fourth have made it only out of their own brains and imaginations, not out of any Scriptural foundation or Authority)

Authority) there must be allowed to be very great differences and unequal degrees of Happiness or Misery in those two places, or else neither the Justice of God nor the different Cases of Men can be accounted for with any tolerable ease and satisfaction to our thoughts, or be any way reconciled to the Principles either of Reason or Religion.

God the Just and All-knowing Judge will give all allowances to the hard circumstances, the invincible ignorance, the unavoidable failures, the powerful temptations, the particular cases and several disadvantages that any of Mankind have been under, and with the fairest and most impartial equity will adjudge all their Conditions and proportion their future Rewards and Punishments according to what is due to them, *all things considered*, according to the right or wrong use of that freedom and liberty which he gave them, and the faults or virtues under that Light and Knowledge they had, of their own wills and choices, by which alone they can either be or be denominated good or bad Men. Some of Mankind seem not to have either Vertues enough to qualifie them for Heaven, or to be so wilfully vicious as to deserve Hell, but to be in a kind of middle state here between Vertue and Vice, whatever they shall be in hereafter; and many who are guilty of some Vices which the Scripture declares damnable and exclusive of Heaven, yet are not of such downright Irreligion and General Profligacy and Debauchery

Debauchery as others : Thus also many have some real sense of Religion, but yet are but weakly moved and influenced by it, and do but just live in a very low way of Grace and Vertue, and are not so Rich in good works, nor do so abound in Acts of Piety, Zeal, Usefulness, and Charity as others. Therefore one Equal Complete Perfect Entire State either of Happiness or Misery cannot belong to all these alike, but Heaven or Hell are proportionably unequal different conditions of both exactly suited and fitted to the Moral and Religious Deserts, Capacities and Qualifications of all Rational Beings in which they shall be fixt to all Eternity without alteration, though perhaps not without further improvements and gradual risings and fallings, according to the Nature of either of those States.

These Thoughts have been a great ease and satisfaction to my self in the Conception of the great and amazing things of another World ; and I therefore communicate them not only on the fore-mentioned account, but because they may be so to others who consider those greatest Objects of Meditation with any penetration of thought, according to the best helps we have of Philosophy and Scripture ; and I am persuaded it would be good Service to Religion if it were thus fairly reconciled in all the revealed Truths and Articles of it to the thoughts of inquisitive Men, as I doubt not but it may be. But this is a subject of another Nature, which I am not now to meddle withal.

C H A P.

C H A P. VI.

*Practical Rules and Directions concerning
the Particular Exercise of Repentance.*

I Shall now consider the Particular Exercise of Repentance taken as a single Duty distinct from all others of Obedience, which are in the largest sense involved in it, and without which it is not effectual to Pardon and Salvation, as I have all along shewn; but Repentance taken singly for a particular act of a Sinner just struck and affected with a sense of his Sins, and exercising at set times Penitential Reflections and proper Actions upon the thoughts and remembrance of them; this which is often called Repentance, and is so in some sense, but not sufficient to compleat this Duty and to entitle us to all the effects of Repentance as they are promised to it in Scripture in a more large and comprehensive Notion, as including a good Life and all manner of Obedience after we have failed and come short in any point: This which I would call Penitence or Penance, as being a Penal Exercise or Penitential Course and Discipline fit for a Sinner to go through, after he has committed any great Sin, or whenever he seriously remembers and considers and recollects as he ought often to do with himself, the most considerable miscarriages of his Life; This consists in these following things.

I. In

1. In confessing of his Sin.
2. In inward and outward Sorrow for it.
3. In Humiliations, Bodily Austerities and Mortifications, and especially Fasting, as the chief of them.

In these the Scripture and the Church and the Custom of good Men in all Ages have placed this Exercise of Repentance as consisting of such Penitential Acts, not as a permanent Habit of renewed Obedience and recovered Vertue, nor as if the Essence or the formal Vertue, and proper fruits of it lay in these, but in Reformation of Heart and Life, Conversion and Obedience to God ; but these are the buds and blossoms of those fruits of Repentance, the seeds and the signs of it, or at least the outward concomitants and attendants of it, and such a retinue as are proper to go along with it, for the solemnity at least and decent performance of it, if not as absolutely necessary to the thing it self. Necessary generally in private but always in publick Acts or Expressions of Repentance, wherein a publick reparation and satisfaction is to be given to God's Honour and Authority, his Judgments to be averted, and his Anger deprecated, and a common sense and apprehension of all this to be promoted and inculcated among others as in publick Penances and National Repentances, and therefore we read chiefly of these upon such occasions, both in Scripture and Ecclesiastical Writers. Open Sins are a dishonouring
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of God, an affronting and despising his Power and Authority, a setting up our Wills against his, a gratifying and indulging ourselves in undue liberties and unlawful inclinations of Body : Now 'tis fit therefore in our Repentance for them wherein we make what amends we can to God, and repair the injury we have done him, and undo the Sin as far as we are able, and shew our utmost displeasure against it, that we should fall down before him and confess it, and be sorry for it, and humble ourselves to him, and own our vileness and wretchedness and unworthiness, and express the deepest resentments of it, and shew our anger against our selves, and revenge it very severely, and afflict our Souls and our Bodies with something that shall not be very grateful to them, nor pleasant and acceptable to our Senses.

The design of all this is to beget in our Mind such thoughts of our Sins, and such passions and averfations against them, or at least to let those inward thoughts and passions which are supposed to arise in it from the reflection upon them to have such outward vent and expressions as Naturally belong to them, and as other objects of grief and trouble are apt to excite in them ; for without those inward thoughts and passions which are the spring of these outward actions they are all but feigned and hypocritical, and so a mocking of God who knows the Heart ; and then these outward penitences are like rains and showers to
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make the springs rise higher, and to feed and increase those inward averſions and paſſions and diſpleaſures againſt our Sins ; and thus they are inſtruments and helps to promote Repentance as well as acts and exerciſes of it : But I ſhall conſider them all ſingly, and the particular Rules belonging to each of them.

1. Then Confession of Sins is a neceſſary part of this Repentance ; *If we confeſs our ſins, God is faithful and juſt to forgive us our ſins, 1 Joh. 1. 9. i. e.* this Confession with its due effects will procure forgiveness, as 'tis Prov. 28. 13. *He that confeſſeth and forſaketh his ſin ſhall have mercy.* This is very neceſſary and fit to be obſerved concerning Repentance, and other Duties in Scripture, as Faith and the like, that when Pardon or Salvation is promiſed or aſcribed to any of them, they are to be taken not ſingly and by themſelves, but with all their conſequences and effects ; ſo that 'tis a *Metonymy* of a part for the whole, when it is ſaid, *He that believeth ſhall be ſaved ; i. e.* he that believeth and obeyeth the Goſpel ; and he that *repenteth* or he that *confeſſeth* his Sin *ſhall be forgiven, i. e.* if he ſo repent of it, or confeſs it as to forſake and amend it ; and therefore though the Goſpel promiſes often Bleſſedneſs to ſingle Vertues, as in our Saviour's Sermon on the Mount, yet it means to thoſe Vertues joyned with the others, and not ſeparate from them, for they are all neceſſary to our true Bleſſedneſs ; and when ſome particular Duties have

have the promise of Salvation, 'tis in conjunction with all the rest; for universal Obedience to all the Laws of the Gospel is the only full Condition of our Salvation, and neither Faith or Repentance or any one single Vertue or Duty without *that* will make us happy or save us, as is plain by the whole tenour of it, which yet some are not so willing to understand.

This Confession of Sin which is the first part of Repentance, to own we have done amiss, is an acknowledging the folly and evil of our Sins, that we are sensible they were acts of imprudence as to our selves, of unbecomingness and unworthiness to God, and very impudent breaches and violations of the Laws of Heaven; for our Confessions are not to instruct God or to inform him of what he already knows as well as our selves; nor is he pleased with a long roll or catalogue of our Sins recited before him, but they are Inditements brought against our selves, a Charge and pleading guilty upon it of our many Treasons and Misdemeanours against Heaven; and the reading or repeating of it is to strike us with an inward sense of the sad and dreadful state we are in by reason of them, and how like notorious Criminals we stand convicted by our own Consciences, and condemned by our own Confession, and so without infinite Mercy justly obnoxious to the severest Punishment and Judgment of God. Our Confession is to quicken and enliven

and strike the sense of our Sins more deeply and keenly into our Souls, to make our Hearts bleed afresh upon every remembrance of them, and to renew the Passions of Grief and Trouble upon the thoughts of them. Like those who brought *Cesar's Bloody Coat* into the *Forum*, and shewed the People the holes thro' which his Murderers had stab'd him, that so they might move their highest rage and indignation; so we are to set our Sins before us, that so we may stir up our anger and hatred and displeasure the more highly against them.

Though they are never so long past, yet we should remember them with bitterness, and sigh whenever we think of them, and whatever brings them to our Mind should bring such Passions along with them as shew we do not like them, nor are pleased with them. When they rise up in our Consciences or our Memories, it should be *cum ructu acido*, with a soweriness and loathing as things most unagreeable and offensive to us, and our Confession should be a discharging and casting them from us.

The Soul may be loaded and oppress'd with them till it has thus eased it self by Confession, which may be like lancing an Ulcer, letting out the painful and purulent matter, and laying open the Wound in order to the healing of it. We ought to search our Hearts and Consciences to the bottom, and to own and confess all our Sins, that so we may be duly affected with the grievousness of them, and may excite such penitential sentiments

sentments as are fit often to be stirred up in our Souls. He that is senseless and stupified under his Sins is in a grievous and lamentable case. The Soul is then under the height of the Disease, and has the most incurable Symptoms upon it when 'tis thus under a Spiritual Lethargy, and its ill Habit and Crasis is like to bring it to an Apoplexy, of which it will dye more certainly and unavoidably. If it be possible it must be brought to pain in order to cure it, and the most smarting Remedies must be used to awaken it and bring it to itself; it must be burn'd and cup'd and scarified to bring some feeling to its seared Conscience, and the sharp sting of its Sins must prick it to the quick to make its brawny and callous Heart have any sense of them. They must therefore be offered to its thoughts and memory with all their aggravations and bitter circumstances, and the most rousing and awakening reflections and considerations. And this is the design of Confession, to keep a lively and quick and due sense of our manifold Sins upon our Minds, that we neither forget them nor become insensible of them.

God will not forget them, nor does he need to be reminded of them; but we must remind our selves and say with *David*, *My sin is ever before me*, *Psal.* 51. 3. and *mine iniquity I have not hid*, *Psal.* 32. 5. that is, not from my self and my own thoughts and remembrance; for to hide it from God is impossible, but I will always have a sorrowful sense and bitter remembrance of it.

2. This is to be joyned with inward sorrow and contrition, and with our outward weeping and lamenting, as *Peter* upon denying his Master *went out and wept bitterly*, *Matth.* 26. and his Penitents in the Acts *were pricked to the heart*, *Acts* 2. 37. and were under great sorrow and compunction of Mind, and *David watered his couch with his tears*, *Psal.* 6. 6. and *rivers of water run down his eyes*, *Psal.* 119. 136. And the Scripture describes Repentance by a *broken and a contrite heart*, *Psal.* 51. 17. in opposition to a hard and impenitent one. All Penitents are drawn with a sad and mournful look, with tears in their Eyes, and sorrow in their Hearts, smiting their Breasts and wringing their hands, and all the figures of Grief and Lamentation, and covered with a veil of sadness and disconsolateness. For Grief and Sorrow are Passions of Soul upon the presence of any evil that is afflicting and uneasie to us; and Sin being the greatest of those evils, should cause the highest of those passions, and we have more reason to be sorry and lament for it than a Widow over her lost Husband, or a Mother over her first-born that is dead, or a Friend over another that is murdered ruined and undone; for our Souls ought to be dearer to us than any thing else, and Sin kills, ruins and murders them. But here I must interpose a Caution: Sin is a Spiritual Evil, and works not upon our Bodily Passions so strongly and deeply as those other objects may which are more suited to them, and more fit to excite such animal sensations

sensations and impressions as Naturally rise from them. Thus sensible Beauty may charm our Animal Spirits more than the Intellectual Pulchritude of Vertue, and Musick may more ravish us than the harmony of Reason, or than the thoughts of the Heavenly singing and Hallelujah; and these and the tastes of some sensible dainties may more affect us with a sensible pleasure than the very joys and pleasures of Heaven as we can now conceive them; for they are more suited to our Animal Nature, and more agreeable to the mixt Faculties arising from the Union of our Souls and Bodies, and so there may be more pain and sorrow felt for a Wound in a Man's Body than for a Sin in his Soul, and more tears shed for the misfortune of a Friend or the loss of a Child or a near Relation than for the miscarriage of our Lives or the commission of a Sin; for the one is a sorrow of another Nature and another kind, raised not by Sense but by Reason, not Natural but Religious, not from Mechanism of Body but Consideration of Mind, and therefore the greatness or the sincerity of our Repentance is not to be measured by the quantity of our Tears, or the number of our Sighs, or the degrees always of Animal Sorrow; but rather by the sincerity of our Wills and the actual performance of our good Purposes of forsaking and amending our Sins, which are the only sure marks of our disliking them, and being sorry for them, and having a true hatred and aversion to them;

for those secret and inward Passions of Mind, are not to be known often either by our selves or others, but by the effects, and we can only know we love Vertue and hate Sin by following the one, and forsaking the other; for no Man loves a thing heartily but if it be in his power he will attain it, and no Man otherwise loves Vertue or Heaven: No Man hates any thing or is heartily sorry for any evil, but if it be in his power he will remove it if present, and avoid it if absent. No Man can know he has the *love of God* but by this in which the Scripture places it, by *keeping his Commandments*, 1 John 5. 3. and therefore I am afraid that School distinction between Contrition and Attrition, that the one is a Sorrow from the Love of God, and the other from the Fear of Hell, and so the one is sufficient and the other is not, has little or nothing in it but words, by which Men may easily cheat and deceive themselves; for the secret springs and principles of Mens Passions lye too deep to be discerned, and they run into one another and are so mixt and confounded that they cannot be distinguished; neither is there any great difference between them; and only the effects of them are taken notice of in the account of God and the concerns of Religion. It is a meer Nicety to distinguish such Principles in the first forming of Repentance, like looking for the colours of Flowers or taste of Fruit in the several Seeds of them, whereas he that from true Religious

Religious Principles, be they either Love Hope or Fear, (and they generally are mixt and combined together, and we cannot divide the force or weight of each of them severally upon the Mind) whoever I say from these, or any or all of these is so concerned for his past Sins that he leaves them and forsakes them and becomes a good Man, he has undoubtedly true Repentance; and whatever the Principle of it was, whether Love or Fear, and whatever degree there was in the Sorrow, and trouble and concern for it, it is that fruit and effect and permanent issue and result of it that constitutes and denominates it true and perfect Repentance.

Let not therefore any Man doubt his Repentance who has this evidence and demonstration of it; and let no Man deceive himself without this, and think that the Keys of the Church, or any thing the Minister can do for him, or any thing that Christ has done for him, or the Merit of his Blood, or any Free-Grace, or any Faith in him, or any thing that a deluded and impenitent Sinner is willing to catch hold of, can turn his Sorrow, be it never so great, and be it from what Principle soever, either of Love or Fear, into perfect and sufficient Repentance without the effect of Reformation and a good Life, and performing the Conditions of the Gospel necessary to Salvation.

Godly Sorrow is an excellent means and a good Beginning of Repentance; 'tis sowing in tears those seeds of Religion which may

may grow up to maturity of Goodness and amendment of Life, and if those penitential tears wash away the filth of our Sins, and *cleanse the Hands and purifie the Heart* of a Sinner, they are then true Repentance. If the Salt that is in them eat out our Corruption and preserve us from all impurities afterwards, and the bitterness of the Sorrow makes us disrelish and dislike our Sins ever after, and wean and turn away our Affections from them; and like the Waters of *Siloam* work upon us and perform the Cure, when they are thus stirred and impregnated with a Divine Vertue by the moving of Heaven upon them, then they are of great Vertue, and ought to be frequently used and cherish'd and indulged as they were of old for this purpose by the devout and tender Penitents: But all Constitutions can no more weep and shed tears alike than they can make the Hairs of their Head white or black; and though all should be sorry for their Sins, as being convinced in their Minds of the evil of them, yet the passionate degrees and the outward expressions of this Sorrow fall not under any rules or measures, but are best judged and known by the effect, which is leaving them as what we do not like but hate. Without this our Tears run wast, and our Sorrow is but an empty Cloud, or Rain upon barren Ground without any Fruit, and all our bitter Cries, and Lamentations, are but as the Mournings of the *Ephesian* Matron, when we can strike up again immediately with our Sins, and take the causes of our

our Sorrow and the murderers of our beloved Joy immediately into our Hearts and our Embraces.

3. Humiliations, Bodily Austerities and Mortifications, and especially Fasting, make up this Duty of Penitence or Exercise of Repentance. For thus the Penitents of old put on Sackcloth and spread Ashes upon their Heads, lay prostrate upon the ground and rent their Cloaths in the *Eastern* Countries, and fasted and denyed themselves their ordinary Food, and afflicted their Souls with these severities upon their Bodies. For Sin being committed chiefly by the Body, as not only the Instrument but the Tempter to it, and the Flesh and its Carnal gratifications being the strongest and commonest allurements to it, therefore to shew their anger and displeasure against it, they revenged it upon their Bodies, and chastized those *Servants of unrighteousness*, and used such a discipline upon them as might punish them for what was past, and be a means to prevent their sinning for the future: And to shew the sense they had of their own vileness and unworthiness for having offended God, they exprest and testified it by all acts of Humiliation and lowly submission to his Power and Greatness which they had formerly opposed, withstood and disobeyed. Now these Acts or Exercises of Repentance were so acceptable to God, when they were the signs and effects of a true penitent Heart, that we find in Scripture how it prevailed with

with God so far to pardon Sin as to remove the Temporal Judgments he had denounced against it. Thus *Niniveh* was saved from destruction, *Jonah* 3. when *they* proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth, and decreed that neither man nor beast should taste any thing, but be covered with sackcloth and ashes, ver. 7, 8. And *Josiah* when he thus humbled himself and rent his Clothes upon his hearing the destruction of *Jerusalem* denounced by the Prophetess, had it defer'd till after his Death, 2 *Kings* 22. 19. And even wicked *Ahab* had God's Judgment respited and took off from himself, because when he heard it, *He rent his clothes and put sackcloth upon his flesh and fasted*, 1 *Kings*. 21. 27. God himself assigning this as a Reason to the Prophet, *Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? Because he humbleth himself before me I will not bring the evil in his days*, ver. 29. And we find these Acts of Humiliation and this Discipline of Fasting joyned with Repentance not only in the *Jewish Church* but also in the *Christian*, in the first and best Ages when this Penitential Discipline was most strictly observed by all Penitents. Now the Question is,

1. Whether these are necessary as proper acts or parts of Repentance, or whether internal Repentance without these outward Exercises of it may not be sufficient?

2. Whether if they be not necessary they are not useful and proper to promote or at least to express it?

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Now as to the first Question, The necessity of these, we must make a difference between publick and private Repentance.

In publick Repentance, as that of a Nation or City when they would remove or avert a Judgment, and deprecate God's Anger due to their Sins, and exercise a solemn and publick Repentance for them, this ought to be done by outward Humiliations and Fastings, and such signs and expressions as are proper and usual to testifie great concern and trouble and mourning and humiliation, that so they may make the best acknowledgment and satisfaction to God for their Sins, and the best reparation to his injured Honour and Authority, and may beget in others, and propagate over the whole Kingdom or Nation the same penitential sense and concern for their Sins, in order to avoid the danger and the judgment due upon them. And thus in the publick Exercises of Penitence in the Christian Church, when any had by a notorious and scandalous Sin brought a reproach and infamy upon the Church and their Religion, the Governours were concerned for its Honour and Credit to take notice and turn them out of their Communion, and put them in a state of publick Penitence for their grievous faults. And here it was necessary for such Persons to satisfy the Church by their outward Acts of Repentance, Mourning and Humiliation that they were truly and inwardly penitent, and were likely to live better and
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become other Men before they receive them again into their Communion, and this though it was but a Prudential Method and an External Discipline of the Church, yet was excellently fitted for the reclaiming and reforming great and open Offenders, by thus shaming them out of their sins, and keeping the Rod over them and shutting them out of the Church by the power of the Keys till they were fit to be admitted and received in again upon the probable signs of a True Repentance; and this our Church has good reason to wish for again, and ought to restore it, did not the state and circumstances we are in unavoidably hinder it; but it is utterly impracticable under great Schisms and Divisions from the Church, and great Loosness and Contempt of Religion, which make it impossible for the Church to exercise this Discipline which were otherwise its Duty; but this is at most but an Useful Discipline, not a necessary or Essential part of Repentance to go through those penitential courses of Humiliation and Mortification which the ancient Penitents did; all that is strictly necessary and all that the Scripture commands as a duty is an Internal Penitence towards God transacted between him and our own Souls, wherein we humble our selves before him under a sense of our own vileness and unworthiness, and with the greatest submission of our Souls bow down our selves, and own his Power and Right to punish us, and beseech him for Christ's sake not to use it, *i. e.* to pardon and forgive us;
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Now this I doubt not with sincerity of mind at present, and Amendment of Life afterwards is a sufficient Exercise of this Duty to private and particular persons without all the other Solemnities and performances of a publick Penitence; for the design of those is hereby fully attained as to the Person himself, which was to amend him and to recover him and to make him more careful not to offend for the future, by his shame and sufferings for what is past.

The Church of *Rome* has turned this Discipline of Publick Penitence used in the Primitive Church into Auricular Confession and Private Penance, which besides the folly of giving Absolution first, and supposing some of the guilt and punishment remaining after the Sin is pardoned, and making the Eternal punishment easier to be got off than the Temporal, and imposing trifling and ridiculous penances, and making them properly satisfactory, is a shameful corrupting an antient Practice, and using the Keys of the Church only to unlock the Consciences first, and then the Purges of the Laity, and is a wretched Corruption of the true Notion of Repentance, by making it a light and transient thing, and that the least degree of Sorrow by the Power of the Keys is sufficient for Pardon and Salvation.

From them I doubt not came the first loose and wretched Mistakes about Repentance, and these being joyned with the false and unwary Doctrines of others about Justifying and Saving Faith, its being a mere fiduciary liance upon Christ and his Merits, and that we were to be saved by the free Grace
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of the Gospel without Obedience to its Commands or performing its Conditions, and that God's Grace was so powerful and miraculous in the Conversion of a Sinner that it did its work Instantaneously and Irresistibly; these hindred Men from performing that Duty, that true Repentance and Obedience which they thought upon some accounts not so necessary, or that they expected could be done for them in an instant, and so they need not trouble themselves about it all their lives; by these Reserves and false Principles, and comfortable as they call 'em, but deceitful Doctrines, they shifted off the difficult task of leaving all their Sins and leading a good life, which otherwise must be owned to be the only true way to Salvation and Happiness, and when this appears clearly to us, as it will if we rightly understand Religion, nothing but downright Atheism and disbelieving it will hinder the Power and Efficacy of it upon our lives.

But as to the Usefulness of those Penitential Austerities and Mortifications and Acts of Humiliation, though private Repentance may be without them, yet they may be of some good Use and Advantage both as means to promote it, and as signs fit to express it. Thus fasting especially and abstinence from food is a proper way both of *afflicting the Soul* and of *bringing the Body into subjection*, and as feasting in the Nature of the thing is improper for one Sorrowing, Mourning, and Repenting, as we ought often to be upon serious and sad Reflections made upon our Sins,

Sins; so for many Sins pampering and indulging the Carcass, is adding fuel to them, and to abate and subtract from our our Meat and drink is to cut off those Recruits and Nourishments which usually *make provision for the flesh, and maintain the lusts thereof.* Now then private prudence and discretion will advise every good Man to make use of that which he finds may be so useful and instrumental to the purposes of Vertue, and to the designs of Religion; but to enjoin it further, and lay an absolute necessity of it to all Persons and Tempers, as of Prayer, giving Alms and other Christian Duties, this is more than either the Church or the Scripture does ever warrant: I speak as to private Repentance, which is effectual to every Man's Pardon and Salvation. As to publick, such as the Publick Fasts commanded by Authority either in the Jewish or Christian Church, there the Nature of the thing and Obedience to those who were lawful Governours made it a Duty to comply with their Religious Commands and Designs, and to Express our Publick and Solemn Repentance by such signs as are fit and usual on such an occasion, and not to keep a Festival when our Governours and our Christian Neighbours, and our Sins and the fear of some Judgment call upon us for Fasting and Humiliation: But how long we are then to fast, and whether to eat nothing till the Evening, and what kind of Meat, is what our Health and Constitution and a little degree of Prudence

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joyned with a good sense of Religion will direct us in without a Confessor; He is a Slave to his Appetite, and makes a God of his Belly who cannot deny himself a Meal now and then upon such an account, and he is a weak and Superstitious Creature who thinks Religion lies in some strict and little niceties of performing this without regard to his Health and the more true and proper designs of it.

Fasting has been always observed by Devout and Pious Penitents in all Ages as an Exercise of Penitence and a help to Devotion and Religion; and Lent or the Antepaschal Fast is especially of great Usage and Antiquity in the Christian Church, but not observed alike in all places, as is plain from *Ireneus* and others; but it was chiefly designed for Publick Penitence of notorious Sinners who were to be restored to the Communion of the Church and Receiving the Sacrament at *Easter*, but it may be of good Use to the private Repentance of every particular Christian who ought to set aside some time for the Examining of himself and the Reflecting upon his past Sins; and as long as he lives he ought to Exercise a particular Repentance for all the wilful Sins, he ever committed, and to have some appointed times to offer up the Sacrifice of a broken and contrite Heart, and to let his Heart Bleed afresh and pierce it self very deeply with the remembrance of its past Sins, which though God has forgotten so as not to punish,

nish, yet he ought never to forget so as not to Repent of them.

I mention not other Bodily penances, such as putting on Sackcloth and Ashes, which were *Eastern* Modes of Mourning, but do no more oblige us than rending our Garments and pouring out Water which were used by them: And as to whipping and going bare-foot, which one calls the penance of a Goose; some of those which are in use in the *Roman* Church are rather Heathenish than Christian Customs, like *Baal's* Priests Cutting and Lancing themselves, and they are no more proper to Cure Men of their Sins, or be Helps to Repentance than the taking a Purge or Vomit, which would work as effectually upon their Minds and expel their Vices and Corruptions as well as any of those Penitential Rods and Disciplines upon the backs of Fools who understand not what true Repentance is.

All such Bodily Exercise profiteth nothing to the freeing from their sins, but is only a commuting with God for them, and makes them believe that Repentance lyes only in such an *opus operatum* which however severe it seems, yet is much easier than to leave their Sins and their beloved Lusts, as we find many of our Lovers of Wine rather choose to take Physick now and then to cure their Head-ach, than to become sober, which would do it much better.

But true Repentance is not to be known or judged of by such unnatural follies which they call the fruits, but are not so much

as the shadows of true Repentance, nor by any of these External Symptoms or Acts of Penitence which are the most proper Exercises or Attendants of it, but by the Change wrought upon our Hearts and Lives, and the Effectual Amendment and Reformation of both; as we are to judge of the Soundness and Goodness of our Health not by the strength or bitterness of the Physick we took in order to it, or by the Regimen and Rules we observed in taking it, though they might be necessary and of good use, nor by its manner of working upon us, but by the Effect of it, which is its Curing us; when that is done, by whatever ways it was, so the work is done and the end attained; and till it be, nothing is done to any purpose; which brings me to the last head of Discourse, Namely the Marks and Signs of True Repentance.

CHAP. VII.

*How we may know we have Repented,
and are in a Pardoned and Good State.*

NOthing is of greater importance to us than to make a right Judgment of our selves as to our Spiritual State, to know whether we are in a State of Grace and Pardon with God, whether our Condition be such that we may reasonably hope we are in his Favour at present, and have a
Title

Title to Heaven and Happiness hereafter. No Man that believes Religion, and is not perfectly thoughtless and stupid, but must upon the account of these things have the greatest Peace and Comfort of Mind, or the greatest uneasiness and disturbance: For nothing is so great an object of our Hopes and Fears, and does so highly affect us as these will or ought to do. No Man should, one would think, enjoy himself one moment, or be at quiet in his thoughts who is in a state of Enmity with the Great God, and lives under his anger and displeasure, and however he may escape here yet lies under the Dread, and Terror, and Amazing danger of another World.

To know and examine and be able to judge of this, should one would think be very plain, because the Rule is so by which we are to judge our selves, and by which God will judge us. The Terms and Conditions of our Salvation are laid down very clearly in Scripture, sincere and constant Obedience to God's Laws, or where we fail of performing that, true Repentance, which is to be in the place and will be accepted instead of Perfect Obedience. But many are willing to cheat themselves, and be deluded with false hopes and mistaken grounds of Comfort, and to say, *Peace, Peace, where there is no Peace*, and to deceive themselves with false marks and signs of Grace, and without any good reason to believe themselves to have an Interest in Christ and be the Favourites of Heaven.

There were some in the Apostle's time as well as ours who had this Opinion of themselves, and made great pretences to the most mysterious knowledge (calling themselves *Gnosticks*) and to the most intimate Communion with Heaven, and to be Christians of the highest form and order, who yet wallowed in all manner of Wickedness, and lived in very great Sins and unlawful Liberties expressly forbidden by the Gospel. They abused some of the Doctrins of Christianity, and perverted the very Design and Constitution of it, and by making a false Scheme of it to themselves altered its Nature, turning, it like our latter *Antinomians*, into a mere Notional Superstition instead of an Institution of Vertue and Holiness, and judged of themselves not by its Rules and standing Terms and Conditions, but by some ungrounded and imaginary Privileges that no way belonged to them. St. John in his first Epistle lays down several Cautions against such as these, and warns the Christians to beware of their loose and pernicious, though pretendedly Christian Doctrins, such as St. James also speaks very openly against when he corrects their mistakes who would be justified by Faith without works, i. e. put into a Righteous and Good State by Christianity without Obedience and Vertue. Little Children, says St. John, let no man deceive you; he that doth righteousness is righteous even as he is righteous, 1 John 3. 7. He that committeth sin is of the Devil, ver. 8. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, ver. 9. In
this

this the Children of God are manifest and the Children of the Devil, ver. 10. Where in opposition to all the false Opinions by which those wicked Men believed themselves in a good State, notwithstanding their Wickedness or their not being Righteous, and made false marks and signs of Grace to themselves, and accounted themselves the special Favourites of God and of Christ by some conceited and peculiar Privileges, though they were wicked and impenitent, and lived in a state of plain and notorious Sin, he lays down a clear and certain, a plain and obvious Mark and Criterion by which we may judge of our selves, and by which alone we can judge right of our Spiritual Condition, and know whether we are in a Pardoned and Good State, and that is this, that we do not commit sin, or live in the practice of any known and wilful Sin whatsoever; till we bring our selves to this, we can never by any means whatever, by any privilege of Christianity, or by all that Christ has or could do for us, be free from a state of guilt and danger, till we get rid of every Sin, and break off every evil way, then we shall recover our good State however dangerous and deplorable it was before, and shall be as sure of God's Favour and a Title to Heaven as if we had been always innocent, and never had sinned. Many are inclined to judge of themselves by some other and kinder measure, and are willing to believe well of themselves, and hope they have an Interest

terest in Christ, and a Title to God's Favour and hopes of Heaven without leaving every Sin, and living such a strict and holy Life as the Gospel requires, they have some Reserves, and some false Notions and Principles in Religion whereby they comfort themselves against this severe Doctrine, and think by some way or other to reconcile their Sins with the hopes of Heaven and their Eternal Salvation. There have been other Schemes of Religion laid down, and such Whimsical Hypotheses made of it by some Men, from the unwary stating and misunderstanding the Scripture Notions of Election, Justification, Faith, Free-Grace, and the like, that they at last come to assert these comfortable Doctrines as they call them, to a Sinner, and so they were if they were true, that their Sins can do them no harm, nor endanger their Salvation, and that Sanctification and Holiness is not necessary as the way or means to Heaven, and that a Sinner may come to Christ, and be Justified by him, and put in a good State before he Repents, even with all his Sins and Filth about him, which are so far from being Saving and Gospel Truths, as they are lewdy and ignorantly called, that they are certainly the most damnable Heresies, and the most contrary and destructive to Christianity that ever were in the World. I am not to enter into any Controversies here, nor shew the Mistakes too many run into about those matters, all those false and abominable Principles.

ples will be removed, and all false Judgments and wrong Opinions of our selves and our Spiritual State taken away and prevented by this undoubted Mark and Criterion of our being in a good State or a State of Grace, which is the surest Touchstone by which every Christian may safely try himself, and every Sinner know whether he is in a Pardoned and good State, namely, that they do not live in any known and wilful Sin whatever. I shall,

- I. Shew the Truth of this.
- II. Consider what other Sins are consistent with a good State.
- III. Represent the Benefits and Effects of Repentance, or the Happiness of being in such a good State.

SECT. I.

Not committing Sin the only sure Mark of a good State.

TO shew this Mark given by the Apostle to be the true Test and Criterion by which we may make Judgment of our Spiritual Condition, and know we are in a good State, I shall offer these following Considerations to prove the Truth of it.

I. Then; Those other Marks which come short of this, by which too many are apt to deceive themselves, are not safe and sufficient.

ficient. Many are apt to make some inward and secret things wrought upon their Minds, the Marks of Grace to them, and the signs and evidences of their good State, whereby they may be sadly cheated and deluded, unless these inward Marks are made more certain and evident by outward and visible Actions. None can know they have any inward Principle of Spiritual Life in their Souls, or the root of the matter in them, as some love to speak, but by such vital operation and visible effects of it in their Lives; as we cannot know the Tree is alive at the root but by the sprouts and branches that shoot from it and shew it to be so, but we conclude it to be dead without those in their proper time, and so we may our selves in a Spiritual sense without the Fruits of Repentance and Holiness in our Lives. A Christian cannot know he hath Faith but by his Works, nor be sure of Grace in the Heart but by the efficacy of it in restraining him from Sin, and the visible effects of it in a Holy Conversation. We cannot so perfectly feel and discern this secret and inward principle in our selves so as to be any way assured of it unless the force and power of it appear in our Actions, and in reforming and bettering our Lives, and to judge of our being in a state of Grace any otherwise from any voice or testimony within, is very precarious and ungrounded, and very liable to error and delusion, for *the Spirit bears witness* to none but those whose *Con-*
sciences

Sciences at the same time bear witness that they are *the children of God by not committing sin*, and it sealeth none but those who have *this Mark*, and bear the Marks of Vertue and Holiness upon their Souls and in their Lives. The presumptuous and conceited Enthusiast is very confident and assured of himself and his good state, though he is evidently guilty of very great and notorious Sins, and therefore he is forced to that lewd Principle, that God sees no Sin in his Children, and that he may be a Child of God notwithstanding those, whereas this according to St. *John* is the only Mark of a Child of God, *that he doth not commit Sin*. To pretend to inward Marks of Grace when we are guilty of sinful Actions, is as if a Man should judge himself to be sound at Heart and healthful within when the Plague is broke out upon him, and the Spots appear and his Sores run; to talk then of the goodness of his Pulse and other secret and uncertain signs within himself, whereby he feels himself to be well, is evident cheat and wretched delusion; and so it is to judge of our Spiritual good State by any inward marks and tokens when our Lives are bad, and *we commit Sin* in the Apostle's sense, *i. e.* live in the practice of any wilful Wickedness. But further, there are other imperfect signs not quite so deceitful and Enthusiastick as these, by which many think they are in a good State though they are not brought off actually from every Sin,
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as that they are troubled and concerned at their Sins, and commit them with great reluctancy and uneasiness of Mind, so that they do the things which they would not, and that they often wish they were better, and have a mind to leave their Sins, and some purposes to do so, though their Sins are so strong and powerful that they still prevail upon them, and they cannot wholly get rid of them, this they take to be good signs of Grace, that they have some good motions and stirrings in their Souls, some desires and wishes, and this desire of Grace they take to be Grace it self; and though they do not the good they would, yet that they have some mind and inclination to do it. Now all this may be in such as are truly Sinners and Unregenerate Persons, that are still in an impenitent state and under the power and dominion of their Sins, but are not quite senseless and stupified, nor are come to what the Apostle calls a *fearful* Conscience, without sense of their Sins, nor to a *reprobate* Mind void of all judgment about them, which is the utmost degree of profligate wickedness; till they are brought to those, their Sins will be uneasy to them, and fill them with trouble whenever they think and reflect upon them, as they cannot avoid to do sometimes, and they will feel sharp twitches and vellications of Conscience as long as they have any Conscience remaining, and have not quite wasted and destroyed it, and worn off all the Natural sense of
Good

Good and Evil upon their Minds; but if they will still sin notwithstanding this, and will not hearken to the secret calls or loud clamours of their own Consciences, but will still follow their Lusts and Vices, and be drawn away by the strong and alluring Temptations of them, all this Regret and Trouble which they sometimes bring upon them is only a self-conviction and self-condemnation, and is so far from giving any abatement to their Sins that it adds this highest aggravation to them, that they are committed all the while against Conscience and against the inward sense of their own Minds. And though now and then in a good mood and a melanchoy fit when they are thus troubled for their Sins they have a Mind to leave them, and come to some faint Wishes Purposes and Resolutions to do so, yet if these prove ineffectual, and the next Temptation overcomes them, and they commit the Sin again when it is offered again and the company or the charms invite again to it, 'tis certain *whosoever thus committeth sin is the servant of sin*, as our Saviour says, *John 8. 34.* And 'tis a sign he is such a slave to it and it hath got such power over him that it leads him captive at its will, and is so far Master of him that he cannot throw it off notwithstanding his frequent Wishes and imperfect Desires that he could; but how short all this is of Perfect Repentance, and therefore of putting us into a good State, I have shewn more largely before,
Chap. 1. Sect. 4.

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2. The Scripture not only forbids every wilful Sin but excludes it out of Heaven, and declares that every wilful Sinner of what kind soever shall not enter into it, as *neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God*, 1 Cor. 6. 9, 10. i. e. whoever are to be denominated such by the practice of their Lives and habit of their Minds, by their living and dying in any of those Sins whatsoever, or in any one of them. This is plainly adjudged by the Gospel, which is the Rule God will judge us by at the last day, and by that Rule we may judge our selves now, and all other judgments of our selves are false and deceitful. Whatever Sinner finds himself in the number of that black Catalogue, may see his Name as it were in the dead Warrant, and nothing but timely Repentance and Amendment before he dyes can blot it out. The Sentence of Damnation is as positive and express against all or any such Sinners, as the Sentence of Death is against Treason or Felony by the Civil Law, and no hopes to escape the Knowledge or Justice of infinite Wisdom and infinite Power, and therefore whoever; is cast by any one such Inditement and found guilty of any such Capital and Mortal Crime can never escape before the Divine Tribunal, the process of which is laid open to us by the Gospel, and by that we should judge our selves
now,

now, as impartially as we know God will hereafter.

3. The Reason of this is plain, namely, of God's forbidding every wilful Sin upon pain of Damnation, and excluding every such Sinner out of Heaven, for otherwise he could have forbidden no Sin, but must have laid open all his Laws to be broken and trampled on by the disobedience and unruliness of his Creatures; for had he suffered every one of Mankind to live in impunity under any one wilful though single Sin, such as his particular inclination or his interest would most incline to, by this means he would have opened a gap for the breach of all his Laws, so that none of them should have been duly observed, but all of them broken by parts and by piece-meal by some Sinner or other; one would have chosen to have gratified his Revenge, another his Lust; one would wallowed in Drunkenness, another have pursued his Gain by all the methods of Fraud and Unrighteousness, and according as Mens inward Tempers and outward temptations had been, so they would have chosen or indulged every one of them their beloved Sin, and so God must have given up all his Authority and his Government to some or other of the vicious inclinations of his Creatures if he had not forbid all Sin whatever upon pain of Damnation and excluded it without exception out of Heaven.

4. One such wilful Sin is such an Affront Contempt and Disobedience to the Divine Authority

Authority in general as involves in it an Universal guilt and breach of the whole Law of God; thus St. James saith, *He that shall keep the whole law besides, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all, James 2. 10.* for this reason, for he that said *Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill;* now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill thou art become a Transgressor of the law, ver. 11. i. e. the same Power and Authority of God gives Sanction to all his Laws and 'tis a vertual disowning and disclaimer of that, wilfully to disobey it and rebel against it and openly oppose it in any case, which he does who lives in any one known and wilful Sin, and is to be accounted an Enemy and Traytor to Heaven and punished as such, who renounces its absolute Power and Right to Govern him in all things, and subverts the whole foundation of Obedience and Submission to it.

5. One such wilful Sin or vile Lust, if it be suffered to prevail upon the Mind expels all true Principles of Vertue and Religion out of it, or shews it to be devoi'd of any such, as being utterly inconsistent with them; for he that alloweth himself in any sinful liberty or unlawful Practice contrary to the plain Rules of Religion, can never have a due and just sense of that upon his Mind, nor be supposed in any other things to be governed by such considerations of God and Heaven and Religion as are the true principles of all Vertue and Goodness; where those are not in the heart, all seeming Acts of

of Vertue and Religion lose their form and worth and excellency, and are but the spurious Off-spring of Chance and Humour or Interest; for he that does any good action, or abstains from any bad one out of Regard to Religion and the Considerations of God and another World, would for the same reasons act uniformly and not allow himself to live contrary to those in any other instances, nor comply with the most darling lust or strongest temptation when contrary to those; but if he does so in any case he may as well do it in others, for this shews that he is swayed and governed by some other Principles than those of Religion: A sense of Honour as 'tis call'd, or not doing a thing base and scandalous in the opinion of others, or a prudent Caution and Discretion in serving our present Interest, these may keep many Men from some Vices that would destroy their Credit or their present Advantage; but if there be no other foundation for them, it is not Vertue and Religion, but only Art and Managery, which may have its reward here, but will never be rewarded in Heaven. And this is what some commonly mean by a Moral Man; but 'tis a mistake, for this is only a Man of Conduct and Cunning, whereas Morality is founded upon true and certain and Eternal Principles and Reasons of Vertue; but he that acts not by those nor any Principles of Religion, will be a Knave for his Interest and a Secret Sinner for his Lusts, and make his Conscience give way as oft as there is occasion to his Convenience or Inclination;

for in other sins which the Custom and Opinion of the World have not made so infamous or so disadvantageous, there he can be notoriously guilty and break the plain Rules of Vertue and Religion. He that can do so by indulging himself in any wilful Sin, as he corrupts and spoils all his other seeming Vertues by making them to be base born, and not to proceed from a Religious and Vertuous Stock, so he throws off all true Principles of Religion, and shews that he has no true Root or genuine Seed of it in his heart.

6. Such an one lyes open to all other Sins, and may for the same reason commit any, that allows himself in one. When the mind is thus prostituted and debauched by consenting to any one particular unlawful Lust, it would grow common to all others if it had the same temptation to invite, and the same opportunity to commit them; and 'tis only for want of those that it is not universally lewd and wicked, and given up to commit all uncleanness with greediness. What should hinder or restrain him from all other Sins, who gives way to any one plain and great one? If he were assaulted by the like temptation in any other place he would yield to it and comply with it even in the grossest manner; for he has lost his guard and the security of his Vertue, and by such a wide and open breach made in his Conscience all other sins might enter and the whole Legion take possession of him. There can be no true Reason to pre-
serve

serve him from any or from all sins, who knowingly and wilfully allows himself in any one.

7. Any such sin is utterly inconsistent with true sincerity; and this we know is absolutely necessary to our good state though perfection of Obedience is not. 'Tis truly and commonly said, that God requires not absolute perfection of us, but only true sincerity; because the best Men cannot attain to the one, and he must be a very bad one who hath not the other: But there is a *perfection of parts and degrees*; we are not bound to the highest degrees of every Vertue in order to a State of Grace and Goodness, but we are to have such a perfection of parts as to perform every Duty and every Vertue required of us, and to be without every wilful Sin contrary to the Divine Law, for less than this will not amount to true sincerity that shall commend us to God and approve us to him who knows our hearts; for whilst he sees there any one sin that we love more than we do him, which we prize and value above his favour and all that he can give, us even Heaven it self, he cannot think our hearts are upright towards him, or that we sincerely love him; for can he sincerely love God, who does any wilful thing that he knows is infinitely displeasing to him? And can it be consistent with the faithfulness and integrity of friendship to do the most injurious and the most disobliging things imaginable? Can he love his Prince or the Government where he lives who endeavours in any thing to subvert and destroy that Authority

ty by an open standing out and breaking their Laws? There may be indeed a Personal Love to an Earthly Prince distinct from Obedience to his Laws, (and so some would have to God and Christ) for he may be capable of receiving other Pledges and Testimonies of it, and may be many other ways obliged by us, because he may have a distinct Interest or Inclination different from his Laws; but this cannot be in God, whose Laws are always agreeable to his Nature and the result of his own infinite Wisdom and Reason; and he can never be pleased with any that act contrary to them, nor is capable of receiving any other grateful or acceptable thing from us but only Obedience to his Commands, so that by this only we that are his Creatures can oblige him, and testify the sincerity of our Love to him, as St. John says, *This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments*, 1 John 5. 3. There is no other certain sign or expression of our Loving God but obeying him, and no sign of Loving him *with all our heart and soul and mind*, but obeying him Universally; and not dividing and sharing out our Love to him and our sins, and suffering any of our vile Lusts to be his Rivals and Competitors in our Affections. Whilst we allow our selves in any known and wilful sin we take part with that which is an Enemy to God, we harbour and nourish a known Traytor to him in our breasts; and if we will not give it up, we break with God and Declare open Enmity against him, and will rather part with him and his friendship

ship than part with a Paltry and a Vile Lust. Whilst we thus indulge any darling Sin and secret Wickedness in our heart, as God cannot love us so neither can we sincerely love him; but whatever shows and pretences of kindness and respect we may shew to him otherways, whatever Courtship and Honour we may give to him by the Ceremonies of Worship, and the External Rights and Offices of Religion, yet he will account us only false and treacherous and hypocritical Wretches, and not accept of any thing else we offer to him: For,

8. Allowing our selves in one such darling Sin or beloved Lust, spoils all our Religious Duties, and makes them both unacceptable to God, and us unfit to perform them as we ought. He that allows himself in any secret Sin and unlawful Lust how must he be sunk into a sensual State that will keep him from rising to Spiritual Thoughts and Exercises? His Mind is taken up with other apprehensions and ideas of different objects, which he prefers to all the things of Religion, and these sink down his mind and bemire it in flesh and sense that it cannot use its wings or rational faculties, and mount upwards to the purer objects of Faith and Religion: Those vitious inclinations must quench and put out the fire of Devotion, and Make the mind move sluggishly and heavily in such an improper work, and damp all its Religious Ardors and Affections. When a Man out of a Na-

tural Sense of God cannot excuse himself wholly from worshipping and praying to him, (for I speak not of such as have cast off all Religion, but only such as allow themselves in one wicked Lust or unlawful Liberty) how must it be a violence to him to pray against a Sin and beg pardon of it and Grace to forsake it, when he secretly resolves to keep it, and has no true and full design in his mind to leave it? What a struggle must there be between his Conscience that is awakened by his Devotion and his sensual Appetite which is so fond of the Sin that nothing can keep him from it, and who when he is deploring himself in the holy Offices, yet intends to commit it, the next opportunity? What horrid Mockery and impudent Banter is this with the great and awful Majesty of God? And what wretched Hypocrisie to make shows of great Honour and Address to him when our Hearts are not right with him, and we must know that *he* well knows they are not so? No Man could have the face to be so impudent to another as to come and make great court to him, and express great Respect and Reverence and Kindness for him, when he knew at the same time that the other also knew that this was all false and hypocritical, and that he took all occasions at other times to affront and condemn and disoblige him. And yet thus every Man does who under all his Devotion and seeming Piety nourishes a secret sin and unlawful Lust, and demurely covers a vile fraud or injustice or
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any immorality: So that either a Man must throw off all Religion, or throw off every secret and beloved Sin; for either his Sin will spoil his Religion or his Religion must cure him of his Sin, or he must have great Mistakes and false Apprehensions of Religion who thinks to compound with Heaven and to pay External Homage to it, and that God will accept of that instead of inward Vertue and sincere Obedience. One would think no Man could ever heartily perform one act of Devotion, who has any such sin in reserve that he will not part with; but I am sure whoever does so his Devotion will never be accepted by God, and it will be in vain to worship him openly while we secretly disobey him; such a blemish spoils all our Sacrifices and defecrates and pollutes the most sacred Oblations, and as the Prophet exprest it to the Jews, makes him *that killeth an Ox, as if he slew a Man; he that sacrificeth a Lamb, as if he cut off a Dogs neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swines Blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an Idol, Isa. 6. 3.* and he giveth the reason at the latter part of the verse, *They have chosen their own wayes and their Soul delighteth in their abominations,* and these turn their very Prayers into sin and make them an abomination to God, as Scripture assures us, *Psal. 109. 7. Prov. 28. 9.* 'Tis strange and unaccountable to consider that a Man should have some sense of Religion and be govern'd by it in a great many things and live up to the Rules of it in several in-

stances and yet be so besotted and infatuated as to let one darling sin overcome and enslave him, when he knows that *this* by the Principles of his Religion is as damnable and destructive as any of the rest; which is just as if he should be careful to preserve his Health and avoid a great many Diseases, and live by regular Methods to that purpose, and yet give himself a mortal stab and a wound that will certainly dispatch him; for one Sin, like one Wound, may be Mortal and bring Death along with it as well as many, and one drop of Poyson may kill, and one wilful sin damn us as well as more.

God will not judge of our sins as the Custom and Opinion of the World does, nor abate of the Measures of our Duty and Conditions of our Salvation as we madly and unreasonably do our selves; but whatever sin stands condemned by the Divine Law, however Modish or Common and Customary it be, that will not alter its Nature, nor take off its guilt and danger; one Man's Temper carries him to such Sins that he thinks Flesh and Blood cannot resist; another's Trade or Business tempts him to others that he thinks 'tis impossible to get a Livelyhood without them; he cannot drive his Bargains with his Customers without immoderate drinking, nor Sell and Trade in the World without Customary Lying, and perhaps Swearing; and to persuade Men out of those that their Convenience and Condition, or their Temper or Complexion do

do so strongly dispose 'em to, is to *pluck out a right Eye, and cut off a right Hand.* I confess it is so in our Saviour's sense; but 'tis also very necessary to do this, to Cut off even the most pleasant or advantageous Sin, and deny even the most darling and beloved Lust, if we would not be cast into Hell hereafter, and into a bad State at present: Our Saviour's Words there suppose and imply that, but, as he says *'tis more profitable,* more for our Good, Interest and Advantage to forego any pleasure, and part with any Advantage, than for the sake of them to expose our selves to such a miserable state.

He that is truly afraid of Hell, will not dare to live in any such sin as he knows will bring him thither; he must be strangely thoughtless and inconsiderate, or else a downright Atheist, Infidel or Sceptick, who can allow himself in any such sinful Liberties and undue Practices as are directly contrary to Religion and inconsistent with all the Fears and Hopes of it; and as one would think, with all true Faith and belief of another World. But let every one that hath those, and any serious sense of Religion remaining upon his Mind, not venture to indulge himself in any secret or known Sin, nor harbour any beloved vice or wickedness in his Soul; but let him though with the greatest Self-denial to his Temper or difficulty to his Circumstances and Condition in the World, break it off and tear it from his Heart though it stick by never so many strings

strings and fibres and be like a second Nature grown to it, like a Cancer it will certainly kill us if it be not thus torn from the Breast, and so perfectly cut off that none of its spreading Venom or Poyson remain behind. He that has any such mortal illness growing upon his Mind, or has been guilty of any such wilful Sin as puts him into an ill state, must thus Repent of it so as never again to commit it, nor live in the practice of it afterwards, or else till he do this he can have no hopes that he is recovered or got out of it, nor any reasonable grounds to believe that he is in a Condition any way hopeful or comfortable: For,

Lastly, 'Tis only this mark of not committing any known and wilful sin that distinguishes good Men who are *born of God*, from those who are wicked and *the Children of the Devil* and Enemies to God. And to be sure there must be some very great and notorious difference between them, and some plain and evident marks by which they may be known from one another; now those are plainly given us by St. John, 1 Ep. 3. c. 8, 9. *ver. He that committeth sin is of the Devil, and whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin.* Where nothing less can be meant by committing sin than living in the practice of any known sin or wilful wickedness which destroys the image of God upon the mind, and so defiles and depraves our Souls that they are unlike to the pure and holy and unspotted Nature of God; and when any Vice

Vice of Pride, Lust, Malice or the like abides upon them, they bear these Marks and Signatures and likeness of accursed Fiends and of their *Father the Devil* upon them in Scripture phrase: There are none such great Sinners as to break all the Divine Laws; some sins are contrary to one another, and some may be contrary to our Inclinations, Complexions, or Conditions and Employments; but he that will violate any one Law as it suits with any of those and will gratifie any Lust or Temptation as it is offered to him, he is one whom the Scripture denominates a Sinner in the high sense, *i. e.* one who stands condemned by it to an ill state here, and to Eternal Misery hereafter. We are all Sinners in a low sense, as I shall shew presently when I come to state the difference of Men's sins, and enquire what are and what are not consistent with a good state, but no Judgment could be made between a Good and a Bad Man if this did not distinguish them, that the one though he may be encompassed with a great many frailties and infirmities yet never allows himself in one wilful known and deliberate wickedness, which the other does: There may be degrees both of Sinners and of Good Men; some have attained to greater improvements and Perfections both in Vice and Vertue, and are more the Children of God or the Children of the Devil; but that which divides their States and cuts the Line of difference between them must be this, that the one allows

allows himself in the practice of some known sin or sins which the other does not, but carefully avoids, and never commits any such wilful Wickedness.

Though this seems very plain and undeniable, and I have endeavoured to convince every one of the truth of it by the several Arguments I have brought to prove it, it being of great use to them to Judge and Examine themselves by this plain and certain Mark and Criterion, instead of the many false and uncertain ones that are given out as signs of Grace, and to judge thereby of their Spiritual Condition, and know whether they are in a Good or Bad State, yet there are two seemingly great Objections against it: The one is the quite other Character and Account which *St. Paul* gives of himself in the Seventh Chapter to the *Romans*, who was undoubtedly in a good state, and a Regenerate Man, and yet speaks of sin dwelling in him, ver. 17. and that the good which he would, he did not, but the evil which he would not, that he did; ver. 19. and that there was a War in his Members warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin which is in his Members, ver. 23. &c. The other is that no Man lives without sin, and that 'tis impossible he should; for in many things we offend all; and if we say we have no sin we deceive our selves, as the Apostle says; and therefore to exclude all from a state of Grace who live in any sin, and to make the not committing sin the only true Mark and Sign of
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of Grace, is a very hard saying and a very severe thing, and in effect is an excluding all Mankind since all are Sinners some way or other, and none are so perfect as to live wholly without Sin: Now the first of these I shall answer very briefly, because I would not enter into any long dispute about the sense of that Chapter; and the other I shall more largely consider in a distinct Section, because it will occasion my giving an account of the difference of Sins, what are and what are not consistent with a Good State, which is a very material point in the right stating and understanding the Nature of Repentance and the Nature of Sin.

First then as to *St. Paul's* description of himself, *Rom. 7*. One of these two things must be allowed by all Sober and Understanding Men.

1. That if he speaks in the Person of a Regenerate Man, as some would have it, then all the Phrases and Expressions of *sin dwelling in him*, and the like, must relate only to those sins of Frailty and Infirmary which a good Man is liable, to and cannot be wholly free from, and which are therefore consistent with a good State, as I shall particularly shew in the next Section. A Good Man, who is especially under a state of imperfect goodness, and not arrived to any great degree of Christian perfection, may say of himself in many Cases, *that which I do, I allow not*; I am guilty of many a hasty word,

word, and undue passion and unreasonable desire and foolish imagination and the like, which I do not approve of with my reason, but dislike and wish I could be perfectly free from, and so in many cases may say *what I would, that I do not*; many degrees of Charity and Devotion and other Vertues which I willingly would yet I do not perform, nor come up to such a pitch of goodness as I gladly would, but fall short in many things of my Duty, and such attainments as I would propose and come up to, such an one may be very sensible of the *body of death* and the bondage of Corruption he is in, and of the strength of Concupiscence and the Law in his Members warring against the Law of his Mind, *Chap. 4. Sect. 3.* But these may only relate to such Imperfections and Infirmities and sins of Frailty and Infirmitie as may consist with a Good State and belong to a Good Man, but they are by no means to be applyed further to the committing any wilful and known and presumptuous sin, which cannot be said of a Regenerate Man or one in a good state: And therefore,

2. Some of those Expressions in that Chapter seem to be such as cannot belong to a Good Man, such as those ver. 14. *I am carnal sold under sin*, ver. 23. *That the law of his members brought him into captivity to the law of sin*, ver. 25. *That with his flesh he served the law of sin*: So that St. Paul seems to speak here not of himself as a good Christian, but of an Unregenerate Person under the Convictions of the Law; and though he

he uses his own name, yet 'tis by a *Metaschematism*, a Figure usual to him in other places, as *Gal. 2. 17, 18.* *If I build again the things which I destroy, I make my self a transgressor, and we our selves are still found sinners.* *Rom. 3. 7.* *If the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie, why yet am I judged as a sinner?* where though he uses his own Name yet 'tis under the Person of a Blaphemous Objector, and *1 Cor. 13. 2.* *If I have all faith and no charity what doth it profit me?* which is an inoffensive way of transferring odious things to our selves when we would describe and reprove them. Thus *St. Paul* here only personates an unregenerate Man; for in other places he gives a quite other Character of a Regenerate one, directly contrary to what is here, as that *He hath crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts,* *Gal. 5. 24.* *And crucified the old man,* *Rom. 6. 6.* and that he is dead to sin, *Rom. 16. 11.* and free from sin and the servant of Righteousness; Whereas here it is said, that sin dwelt in him, that he was carnal sold under sin, that the law of his members led him into captivity to the law of sin, and that with his flesh he served the law of sin, this must be the state not of a good Christian, but of a Man at least under the Law; and therefore the Apostle in opposition to this immediately describes the other more happy state of a Christian under the Gospel in the next Chapter, and in answer to the grievous Exclamation, *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from*

from this body of death, he comfortably replies to himself, *I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord, ver. 25. i. e. there is a remedy for it by Christ and Christianity, and the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death, ver. 2. chap. 8.*

The Answer to the other Objection will be fully given in the next Section.

SECTION II.

The Differences of Sins ; what are, and what are not consistent with a good State.

THAT all Men are Sinners not only Experience but the Scriptures do in many places assure us, that *there is not a righteous man upon earth who sinneth not ; that in many things we offend all ; and that if we say we have no sin we deceive our selves, and the truth is not in us ;* by which is not only meant that no Man is wholly free from all manner of Sin in the whole course of his Life, or can pass all his days without falling into some Sin or other, but that no part of his Life, even when he is come to his best State, a State of Grace and Vertue, is so perfect as to be quite sinless, and without any Sin of what kind soever, so that he should not be obliged to beg Pardon of God, and say daily, *Forgive us our Trespases.* Now this as it is matter of Humiliation to the best Men, so it is turn'd to another use and quite different

ferent purpose by the worst; they comfort themselves in all their greatest Sins, that all Men are Sinners as well as themselves, that none are free from all Sins, and let them that are so, cast the first stone at them; they plainly confound hereby the different states of good and bad Men, and are not willing to distinguish or make such a true judgment as the Scripture does plainly between them; for the same Scripture that tells us all are Sinners and hath concluded all under Sin, yet declares that every wilful Sin is damnable, and that they who commit it and live in the practice of it *shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*, and that *he who shall keep all the law besides, and yet offend in any one point is guilty of all*, and shall be punish'd as truly though not so fully for one wilful unrepented Sin as for more.

There is no way to reconcile this, and take off any seeming difficulty about it, but by that plain difference which both Scripture and Reason allow between Sins, that some of them are Sins of Frailty and Infirmary, which are unavoidable to us in our present state, and which are consistent with a good one, and which the best of Men cannot live wholly without whilst they are in this Body of Flesh and Blood; and that others are wilful and presumptuous, known and deliberate Sins, which are committed with full consent of the Mind, and against a plain Law of God, and with that presumption and disobedience that makes them unpardonable

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without a particular Repentance and a perfect Amendment. It concerns us very carefully to distinguish and know the difference between those, and not to erre to be sure, on the wrong side by judging too kindly of our Sins, and calling those Infirmities and Weaknesses which are Sins of Wilfulness and Presumption; nor can we without judging right and avoiding Mistakes on either hand judge truly and comfortably of our selves, and know what our Spiritual state is, or what condition we are in as to God and another World. The only way to be safe is to avoid every Sin, at least every wilful Sin, and to grow up to as high a degree of Vertue and Goodness as we can, and to get as much mastery over all our Imperfections and Infirmities as is possible. But since some Sins and Frailties will cleave to us whilst we carry this body of Sin and of Death about us, we may use the Psalmist's excellent Prayer both for our Instruction and our Devotion, *Psal. 19. 12, 13. Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults; keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins, let them not have dominion over me; then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression; where he gives us an account of several sorts of Sin:*

1. Such as he calls Errors and secret Faults, by which are meant Sins of Ignorance and Infirmity, which we are to pray God to forgive and free us from as well as from others.
2. Presumptuous Sins, which impleye such

such as are both known and wilful; and those 3. such as have dominion over one, a reigning habitual prevailing power; now if we be kept free from these latter though not the former, we are safe and out of danger, in a state of sincerity and favour with God, and shall be treated as Righteous and Good Men notwithstanding those lesser Faults. *Then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression; i. e.* from any such Sin as shall indanger my Soul, and expose it to Misery and Damnation. I shall consider and explain these several sorts of Sins.

1. *Errors and secret Faults*, Sins of Ignorance and Infirmitie, such as we knew not to be Sins when we committed them, either by a downright ignorance and not knowing any Law of God that forbad them, or by thoughtlessness, surprize and inconsideration, being unawares engaged in them before we could think or consider.

As to Sins of Ignorance our Saviour told the *Pharisees*, *John 9. 41.* *If ye were blind ye should have no sin; i. e.* If ye had been perfectly ignorant of the Messiah's coming into the World, and had had no knowledge of this by the Prophecies of old, and by the Miracles which ye see me do, then your Infidelity and Unbelief had been excusable and without Sin. Where Christianity is not revealed, as to the Heathen World, where Faith is not proposed to Men with those Arguments and Reasons which should persuade to it, there God will not con-

demn them for their Ignorance which they could no way help, and which was only their misfortune, and not their fault.

Our Blessed Saviour says of the *Jews*, *If I had not come and spoken unto them they had not had sin*, Joh. 15. 22. i. e. The Sin of Disbelieving and Rejecting him; as to other Sins known by their own Law, those they had been answerable for to God, as St. Paul says, *As many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law*, Rom. 2. 12. *And as many as have sinned without law, shall perish without law; i. e. the Gentiles who had not the Law of Moses shall be condemned for their Sins by the Law of Nature.*

It has been an uncharitable Question whether any of the *Gentiles* should be saved? Now tho' they cannot be saved in an ordinary way, by Vertue of the Christian Covenant to which they have no title or claim, yet God may in extraordinary Mercy let all Mankind have the benefit of it, and save them by Christ though they know him not; but I am sure he will never condemn them for not knowing Christianity or the Gospel which was not promulged or revealed to them.

There are many others whose Ignorance will no doubt excuse them before God at the last day, such who have lived under the darkness of Popery, and had no opportunity to know the gross Corruptions of it; and others who by their unhappy Circumstances, and want of Education have had no means of instruction in the things of Religion; God will

will make gracious abatements to all those for this and the consequent ignorance thereupon it, which they could not help, and which was, all things considered, unavoidable to them, and they will obtain Mercy like *St. Paul*, for a great many faults because they *did them ignorantly*, 1 Tim. i. 13.

There can be no plea or pretence for this in any of the plain and great Duties of Morality, because those are all known by the Light of Nature, which God hath set up in every Man's Mind, and which is the great security of all Religion: But in matters purely positive and which have not that clear evidence for them, but there may be occasion for mistakes and misunderstandings in things that are not so clearly Good and Evil in themselves, but are of another Nature, of a positive and arbitrary Institution, there Mens Errors and Ignorances and Prejudices may excuse in great measure, though they act not according to the Rules of Christianity and those Orders which Christ and his Apostles have set up in the Church; and this is all the ground of Charity I can have for the deluded and ignorant Sectaries of all sorts, many of which with honest well-meaning Minds may have great weakness of Judgment and want of Understanding; but God will judge Men at the last day rather by the probity and sincerity and honesty of their Wills than by the truth and rightness of their Understandings. Indeed if Mens Ignorance be affected and wil-

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ful, and such as they might easily help if they would use means of instruction and information, and fairly consider and examine things with such helps as they have, then this Ignorance becomes a chosen fault of the Will, and so much as there is of that in it so far it is criminal and blamable, and this is its condemnation that it *loveth darkness rather than light*, and refuseth knowledge and instruction; and *hateth the light*, neither cometh to the light, lest its deeds should be reprov'd, Joh. 3. 20.

There is an Ignorance of the Law and of the Fact; we may either not know that there is such a Command given by God, or though there be such a Law, that such an action comes not under it or is forbidden by it; as many are not sensible there is such a Law concerning Church Union and Communion as forbids all Schism and Separation unless the terms of Communion are sinful and unlawful; or they do not think that worshipping God in their own way falls under the crime of sinful Schism or breach of Charity, but think it a very indifferent thing, and that there is no harm in it. Very many I doubt not do this, and 'tis only their Ignorance can excuse them from a Sin that is very contrary to the great Commands of Christian Peace and Unity: So others think there is no Idolatry in worshipping God before an Image, or Christ in the Host or Eucharist, or praying to the Virgin Mary and Saints and Angels, and giving them a lesser worship than they do
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to God himself; and how far their Ignorance shall excuse them God only can judge; but so far as it is no fault of their Wills, and is consistent with the Honesty and sincerity of their Minds, and is Morally unavoidable to them, so far it will be excused.

Next to Sins of Ignorance are Sins of surprize and Inadvertency, when though we are not Ignorant that such actions are sinful and against a Divine Law, yet we do not consider it at that time nor are aware that they are so. As on a sudden Passion when we have not time to think, when Fear or Anger does so suddenly arrest our thoughts that we have not time to consider that what we do is blamable and faulty, though we know it is upon reflection and consideration. Thus St. Paul when he called the High Priest *whited wall*, Acts 23. 3. being provoked by his unreasonable command that they should smite him on the mouth for saying only, *that he had lived in all good Conscience before God to this day*, ver. 1. When he was reprov'd for this by some who stood by, and said, *Revilest thou God's high-Priest?* He returned this Answer, *I wist not Brethren, that it was the High-Priest. I did not consider it, I was not aware of it; it was done inadvertently, for I know it is written in God's Law, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy People.*

Thus even St. Peter's denial of Christ was out of a sudden fright and a fear that he

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should be so used as he saw his Master was, and he considered not all his warnings, nor heard or minded the Cock crowing twice till Christ reminded him and looked upon him; and the Cock crew again, and then *he went out and wept bitterly*, for it was a grievous Sin though it had something of surprize and inadvertency in it, and therefore found Pardon sooner than those deliberate Apostasies and Denyings of Christ, which the Epistle to the *Hebrews* speaks of as more unpardonable than the Gospel represents this.

Thus *Moses* in a Passion threw down the Tables of the Divine Law, and *brake them beneath the mount*, *Exod. 32. 19.* though the Tables were the work of God, and the Writing was the Writing of God graven upon the Tables, as 'tis said there, and so 'twas a great disrespect to God, *ver. 16.* he being suddenly and extreemly provoked with the sight of the Golden Calf, and the Idolatrous dancing of the People about it.

Thus a good Man may be surprized with a sudden Passion, and undue Anger, hasty and rash Words, and speaking unadvisedly with his Lips, and he may before he is aware be surprized with a Temptation that shall make him have an undue Desire, an unreasonable Wish, a Lustful or Covetous Thought or Look, though he would not when he considers and bethinks himself commit any unlawful act persuant or consequent to any of those;

those; but the suddenness of the thing gives him not time to recollect or use his Reason as he would do, and this proceeds from an unavoidable infirmity of Mind which cannot always be upon its guard, and provided against sudden surprizes, but must think of a great many other things besides those of Religion.

3. Those Natural Inclinations and first Motions of Concupiscence that are in us to things forbidden and unlawful are only Sins of Infirmity, if they go no further than those first Motions Thoughts, and Desires, and the Mind does not give any consent to them, nor indulge or approve them, nor would gratifie them unduly and unlawfully had it power and opportunity; for those first Motions and Inclinations are necessary and unavoidable, arising from the frame and constitution of our Nature, and the Mechanism of our Body, Blood and Spirits, so that we can no more help or prevent them than we can the senses of Pain and Pleasure, or the Appetites of Thirst or Hunger, or the Motions and Impressions of outward Objects made upon our Senses, and therefore they are not simply evil but good in themselves so far as they are Natural, and intended by God to serve the good of the World and of particular Persons and the wise ends of Providence; but as they are irregular and inordinate, excessive and immoderate, and destroy those ends for which God intended them, so far they are sinful, and when any

of those Natural Appetites or Sensual Inclinations grow too strong and unruly, and are not kept under the Government of Reason or within the bounds of Vertue and Religion, then they carry Men to all looseness and Wickedness, and make them commit Sin and Uncleaness with greediness.

A good Man may with St. Paul be very sensible and complain of *this Body of sin and of Death, and of the Law of sin that is in his Members*, of many irregular Appetites and undue Passions, and weak and foolish imaginations and unreasonable desires and Inclinations, of too quick gusts of Sensual things, and too much deadness of Spiritual, of having too many thoughts and designs for Earthly and present things, and too little zeal and affection for things Heavenly that are a Thousand times more valuable. These are imperfections that are in the best of us, and we see that they are so, and are very sensible and complain of them, but yet we cannot wholly avoid them, but after all our thoughts and all our care they still return upon us, and *the Flesh will lust against the Spirit*, and there will be a perpetual War and struggle between them; but if the Spirit do so far prevail by the help of Grace and considerations of Religion, that it do never yield to any wilful Sin, it shall then be rewarded as a Conquerour; which though it did not wholly subdue and drive out that home-bred enemy, yet kept it always under, and made it submit to its Government, and not keep up an open Rebellion against it. Of this I have

have largely discoursed in the Third Section of the Third Chapter.

I proceed now to those Sins which are known, wilful and presumptuous, habitual and reigning in us, any one of which is inconsistent with a good State, and excludes us of God's Favour here and Heaven hereafter; such as the Psalmist in the forequoted place prays against, *Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins, lest they get the dominion over me.*

All known and wilful Sins are presumptuous, as being done in defiance of a Divine Authority that we know has forbid them, and in contempt of God and his Laws, to whom we owe all Honour and Obedience, and notwithstanding all those threatnings and severe Punishments that God has denounced against them, *He that sins wilfully after he has received the knowledge of the Truth of these things, there remains nothing for him but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries.*

This is despising the Law of God, thus wilfully and wilfully to break it, and is sinning with a high Hand and a most presumptuous boldness, when we choose to do that which we know is most highly displeasing to Heaven, and which God has laid all the obligations he possibly can upon us not to do.

When any such Sin gets dominion over us so that it becomes customary and habitual

to us, it makes us the Devils slaves and captives at his Will, and shews that he is our Master, and that we are the Servants of Sin, and overcome by that and brought in bondage to it; that it prevails upon our Minds above all the Power of Reason and Principles of Religion, and that we choose it above all the great things of Heaven and another World that Religion offers to us, and think it more desirable than any of those, and had rather gratifie a paltry Lust and a foolish Inclination than save our Souls and have all the Favour of God; that we prefer it before any other good and let it have the ascendant in our Love and Affections above all other things; for it is utterly inconsistent with any Love of God or any due regard to him, and banishes all Principles of Religion out of our Minds, and destroys all sincerity and uprightness of Heart towards God, and abandons us to a state of enmity with him and everlasting destruction hereafter.

This I have shewn is true of every wilful and chosen and known Sin.

I shall now from the distinction I have given you of these Sins from those of Infirmity, Ignorance and Inadvertency, make the following Inferences and Remarks,

1. That those Sins of Infirmity are to be Repented of, i. e. we are to be sorry for them, and pray God to forgive them: Though they do not destroy our good State, nor deprive us of God's Favour here or Heaven hereafter, yet they are such, as are to be
matter

matter of Trouble and Sorrow and Humiliation to us, and we are daily to pray God to forgive us our Trespases as Christ has taught us in the Lord's Prayer; and the Psalmist in the place before mentioned prays God to cleanse him from his secret faules as well as to keep him back from presumptuous Sins. For

2. These are true and proper Sins, and though they are not charged upon us to our Condemnation, yet this is by the great Favour and Mercy of God, and by Vertue of the Gracious Covenant made in Christ with Mankind; for otherwise God in Rigour and Justice might punish and condemn us for them. The Papists hold a distinction between Sins Mortal and Venial in their own Nature, i. e. that some sins are in themselves damnable and others not, which the Protestants have generally opposed for this Reason, because all Sin is in it self Mortal, and in its own Nature deserves Death, as being *avouia*, a breach and transgression of a Divine Law whose sanction is Death; but it is pardonable only by God's Mercy on the account of its circumstances which make it more excusable with a good and merciful God, but that it is not of it self venial or so little as not to deserve Punishment, they prove from hence, that we are bound to pray God to forgive it. Now it is pure Grace and Favour for God to forgive, and what he is not obliged to; and if he is not obliged to pardon it, he may punish

punish it, were it not for his Mercy and Goodness, and the Gracious Covenant he has made with us in the Gospel. This should therefore,

3. Make us very sensible of God's infinite Mercy and kind dealing with us by the Covenant of Grace. How many innumerable Sins and Frailties are we guilty of in our Lives which are in strictness deviations from the Divine Law? How many secret Sins are we to be cleansed and freed from which we might be ignorant of when we committed, or not remember afterwards, and which are forgotten by us and blotted out of our memories, tho' they are not out of God's, but he might impute and charge them to us would he enter into strict Judgment with us? How many foolish Thoughts, rash Words, irregular Passions, unreasonable Desires are we daily guilty of, and how many defects and omissions of doing our Duty with less degrees of ardency frequency and perfection than we ought to do? These all stand in need of Divine Mercy, and this we shall be sure of for Christ's sake if we are sincere and hearty and upright in our Obedience; but this is a mighty Favour of God and of the New Covenant, and calls for a great sense of Thankfulness and Gratitude.

To say we sin daily, and that the best things we do have Sin mixt with them is true in a certain sense as there is some defect and imperfection in our most Holy Duties, and that we have some Infirmities that we ought

ought daily to confess and beg forgiveness of at God's hands, but this is by no means true of any such wilful Sin as every good Man must be free from whilst he is in a good State, and has a Title to Heaven.

Under the Law God had provided a standing Expiation for the lesser Sins of Ignorance and Infirmary by the daily and other Sacrifices, but there was none for presumptuous Sins, but he that was guilty of them was to be cut off and dye without Mercy by the Law of *Moses*. Christianity is a more Gracious Dispensation, and allows Pardon, for the greatest Sin upon Repentance and Amendment, and the Blood of Christ is a standing Expiation for those and all the lesser and daily Sins we commit, and Christ is our daily Advocate and Intercessor with God for them.

4. When the Scripture says that we are all Sinners, and that if we say we have no Sin we deceive our selves, and that there is not a Righteous Man who liveth and sinneth not, and we by our daily Confessions own our selves to be daily Sinners; this is meant only of those lesser Sins of Frailty and Infirmary, Ignorance and Inconsideration, which I have explained to you, which are consistent with a good State, which regenerate and holy Men are not quite free from, which neither destroy our own sincerity nor God's Love to us, nor our reasonable hopes of Heaven; but any other Sins that are of a wilful and presumptuous Nature, those a

good

good Man must be wholly free from, or else he loses his Goodness and becomes a Child of Wrath and Damnation, till he recovers himself by Repentance; and if he ever falls into any such, he must exercise a most bitter and particular course of Repentance, and put himself into a state of great Penitence, and bring himself to an entire amendment and forsaking of it till he can have any well grounded hopes of Pardon and Salvation.

There have been a great many Disputes about attaining Perfection of Obedience and Vertue in this Life; some holding Erroneously that they could absolutely and fully come up to it and live wholly without Sin; others as Erroneously that they were such dayly Sinners as deserved dayly God's Wrath and Damnation, and that they sinned in every thing they did. Now these extreams of Errors are easily reconciled and cleared this way, that no one can come up to absolute Perfection so as to live without the lesser Sins of Frailty and Infirmary, but every good Man ought to be so perfect as to live without any wilful chosen and known Sin.

5. Even those lesser Sins we must strive against and endeavour to overcome and master, and pray for the Divine Grace, and use all care and watchfulness against them, else they become wilful and voluntary by our neglect of them, and not using a due diligence to prevent and hinder them. Smaller Sins like lesser and smaller Diseases may affect

affect and indispose the most sound and health-
 ful Constitution; but if they are neglect-
 ed and suffered to grow too much upon it,
 they may become great and mortal. The
 first motions of Concupiscence are not strict
 Sins, nor at most but Sins of Infirmity; but
 if those first sparks are not put out as soon as
 they are kindled, but are suffered to glow
 and kindle within by morose thoughts and
 indulged fancies and imaginations, they will
 break out into some undue acts and out-
 ward effects. If the Passions and Appetites
 that are Natural to us are not mortified
 by due care, exercise and thoughtfulness, they
 will grow masterless and ungovernable, and
 be at the beck of every Temptation that
 invites them, and run greedily after every
 Lust that lays a proper object in their way
 or sets it before them. A hasty fit of An-
 ger if it be not put out may not go off in
 a sudden blaze and expire in its own sud-
 den heats and Passion, but the Cholerick
 humour may concoct into malice and re-
 venge, and habitual spite and ill will, and
 so may a fretful peevishness and sharpness
 of Temper spread like a Tetter, and grow
 incurable, and eat out all that sweetness
 and meekness, kindness, love and good Na-
 ture, which are to be the Vertues of a
 Christian in all the proper acts of them,
 however sower be their Blood or predomi-
 nant their Spleen. God may abate in great
 measure for an unhappy Constitution, but
 he will never allow any wilful Sin as the
 effect

effect of it. We must guard ourselves with greater care and watchfulness where we know we lye open to any such weakness, and call in all the helps of Religion to fortifie and defend us against any such enemy that we are so much in danger of, else an impure, an angry, a covetous, an ambitious thought and inclination nourished in our Hearts and not watched over and corrected, may like a poysonous seed or root of bitterness, if suffered to grow up, bring forth all the fruits that proceed from it, and make all those sinful corruptions in the Heart become wilful Sins, and produce actual Transgressions in our Lives.

We must not allow our selves in any Sins whatever upon pretence of their being little, for if we do they become wilful and chosen; and as the Wise Man says, *He that sinneth by little and little shall perish by little and little.* A small leak in a Ship may, if it be not stop'd, let in Water enough in time to sink it, and a small breach in the Banks of a Sea-wall may cause a general inundation.

Some little Sins will adhere to the best of Men; but they must not be voluntary or consented to, but brought upon them by ignorance surprize or inadvertency, and some unavoidable cause or necessity, which Morally speaking is so to them, and they can never perfectly help it; for so much of will as there is in any Sin, so much there is of guilt, and whatever abatements there are in our willing it, by the Mind's not knowing

ing or not thinking of it, or being unawares engaged in it, and not having the full use of its powers of choice or understanding, so much there is of excuse for it, and so far its circumstances make it pardonable by a good God who will not condemn us for any thing we cannot help, and which it was not in our power to avoid, and all Sins of Infirmary are such some way or other: For who can help being ignorant and mistaken after he has used the best ways he can to inform himself of his Duty? and if he then commit a Sin ignorantly, and through the meer error and weakness of his Understanding, God will forgive it him.

So who can be always so much upon his guard and have his thoughts so much about him as not to say a rash and unfit word or do a some-way blameable action, or not have some inward motions and sensual desires rising up in his Mind contrary to strict Reason and Religion? If God should for every one of these enter into Judgment with us or condemn us, no Man could be saved, and no Flesh living could be justified: But he who considers our frame, and knows that we are but dust, weak, imperfect, blind, ignorant, inconsiderate, heedless Creatures, made up of Sensual Passions, Appetites and Inclinations that are a part of our Nature, he will deal very graciously and favourably with us, and not punish us for any unavoidable weaknesses of our Nature, but only for the wilful faults

and presumptuous miscarriages that we wittingly and willingly commit against him and his Laws.

God alone can perfectly judge and exactly distinguish between all the faults of weakness and wilfulness, and tell what degrees of voluntary and involuntary, and so of blame and guilt are in them; he knoweth our Hearts and searcheth our Reins, and can better judge of our Actions and the secret springs of them than our selves.

In great and notorious cases every Man's Conscience can judge for him; but *God is greater than our Consciences and knoweth all things*, and if we sincerely avoid every wilful and great and notorious Sin, and would not for any Temptation in the World commit it, if as the Psalmist says, *We be upright and innocent from the great transgression*, 'tis to be hoped all our other Sins and Miscarriages are Sins of pardonable Weakness and excusable Infirmary, that do no way endanger our good State; and whatever wilful Sins we have been guilty of through the whole course of our Lives, our having left them and truly Repented of them, as I have directed, frees us from all the dangers of them, and puts us into the Blessed State of Pardon and Forgiveness, notwithstanding the lesser Sins of Frailty and Infirmary which we cannot live wholly without.

S E C T.

SECT. III.

The Benefits of Repentance, or the Happiness of being in such a good state.

THE Effects and Benefits of true Repentance, such as have described, and such as have given the sure Marks and Criteria of, are Pardon and Forgiveness, which are very great things and very comfortable words to a poor Sinner to whom nothing can be said more reviving than those few words which Christ pronounced to the *Paralytick*, *Matth. 9. 2.* And which he pronounces by the Gospel to every true Penitent, *Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee*; these are words as powerful and effectual as those of *Lazarus*, *come forth*, and *let there be light*; they will raise a drooping dead Soul out of the Grave, and restore Life and Comfort to him; they will make light spring out of darkness, and dispel the doleful black State he was in, and make lightsome joy and gladness arise in his Soul; nothing can be said so chearing and refreshing, so ravishing and transporting to him unless those other words which will follow upon it, *Go ye blessed, receive the Kingdom prepared for you*; 'tis a very blessed and a very happy state at present next to Heaven it self to have our sins pardoned and forgiven and to be freed from that miserable and wretched state into which they put us, if we are but duly sensible of it as we ought

to be, How would a Criminal that was before condemned and lay under the Sentence of Death, be affected, do we think, and his Spirit cheared and his Heart leap within him, and a new Life be put into him, when a Pardon is brought him from his Prince, and he is discharged from his condemned state, and took off from the Cart or the Ladder?

A Thousand times more reason has a poor Sinner to be raised and comforted when by the Mercy of God and the Love of Christ his past sins and guilt are taken away upon his true and sincere Repentance. The Scripture has pronounced such an one blessed in an especial manner by the Mouth of David, *Psal. 32. 1. Blessed is the Man whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered*; and St. Paul could not find out any thing better to describe the blessedness of a Christian by the Gospel, than by borrowing the same words, as he tells us of David, *Rom. 4. 6. the Holy Ghost inspiring both of them with the same Words and Idea's of Blessedness to Sinners, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.*

I shall shew the Blessedness of this State and Condition which Repentance puts a Sinner in to upon these accounts.

1. As it frees him from the present miserable state he was by in reason of his Sins.

2. As

2. As he is delivered thereby from the Fears of another World, and the more dreadful dangers hereafter.

3. As he is hereby reconciled to God and restored to his Favour, who was angry and displeased with him before.

First, As it frees him from the present miserable state he was in by reason of his Sins. Nothing is so painful and uneasie, so perplexing and tormenting as guilt when it lies heavy upon a Man's Mind and he has a quick sense and apprehension of it; this is to be stung with Scorpions, to be whipt with Snakes, to have burning Torches and all the conceived instruments of torture applyed to us. There is no torment so great as a Man's Conscience struck with the horrors of its own guilt, haunted with its own Fears as so many Furies or evil Spirits following and disturbing it wherever it goes, when it has the mage of its own foul actions always before it, and imagines a Divine Judgment, and Nemesis always behind it; when the very chattering of the Birds speak its crimes to it, as in a known story, and the hand-writing upon the wall makes it tremble and be amazed, and its own inward Consciousness makes it hear and see and read its sad doom and sentence in all places and on all occasions: What a lamentable condition must a Man be in when he lies thus under the load of his Sins, and the burden is greater than he can bear,

and his perplexed mind is in such Agonies and Anguish as is unexpressible: That sure must be a very comfortable thing which will take him off of this Rack, and put him into a state of Ease and Quiet, when he is thus tormented, and be a present Anodyne to relieve his pains. Mankind therefore were in all times very inquisitive and very much concerned to find out a way, if it was possible, to expiate sin and atone guilt: They built Altars and offered Sacrifices, and slew Thousands of Sheep and Oxen upon an Hundred Hills, and came by degrees to offer up Men and to slay their own Children, and to give their first Born for their transgression, the fruit of their Bodies for the sin of their Souls as the Prophet expresses it, *Micah 6. 7.* They would part with any thing however costly or dear to them to free themselves from the pain and fear they were under, and give any hopes or ease to their conscious and timorous and perplexed Minds, This was a great cause of most of the Heathen Superstitions, of their Purgations, Lustrations, Sacrifices and the like, whereby they hoped to clear and purifie their guilty Minds and Appease the Anger of that Divine Vengeance, that they were sensible hung over their Heads by Reason of their sins: This shewed the Greatness of the Disease, and the want and necessity there was of a Remedy for it, which they being ignorant of, used all the means they could think of, and tryed all ways, however, odd and

and foolish, to help themselves; but it was only Christianity could fully make known the Expiation of sin by the Sacrifice of Christ, and our having Redemption by his Blood, even the forgiveness of sins upon our true Repentance, *Colos. 1. 14.*

This is the most Blessed Message and Gospel from Heaven to a poor guilty Sinner, this is preaching good tidings to the Meek and Humble Sinner, Binding up the broken-Hearted, proclaiming liberty to the captives, opening the Prison to them that are bound, comforting them that mourn, as the Gospel is described by the Prophet, *Isa. 61. 1.* and in our Saviour's own phrase, 'tis giving rest to them that are weary and Heavy laden by Reason of their sins, *Matth. 11. 28.* when though we are conscious to our selves of a great many faults we have committed in our Lives, and some of them such as fill us with shame horrour and confusion, when we think of them, yet we are assured they are all blotted out by Repentance, and the whole guilt of them done away as if we had never committed them; this gives great ease and peace to our thoughts when our Conscience is thus discharged of all guilt and the terrible Fears and Apprehensions of it; this is more comfortable to the Mind than to be eased of the most tormenting pain of Body, to have voided a sharp stone after a fit, or have a throbbing Ulcer broke and cured; 'tis unexpressible pleasure to be put thus out of pain, and be restored to the peace and comfort of

a Man's own Mind, when he had once lost it.

He who has so truly Repented of his Sins as I have directed, hath all Reason for this, for he hath as sure grounds of Pardon and needs no more Fear Punishment than if he had been always innocent and never had offended or done any thing amiss; tho' his Sins fill'd his Mind with Sorrow before, and gathered all the black Clouds of Grief and Melancholy over his Thoughts, yet now they ought to be dispersed, and he may chear up and be comforted. If he has any Fears they are unreasonable; for if his Sins are perfectly gon, they ought to be gon too.

While he was under the guilt of his Sins he had Reason with *St. Peter to weep bitterly*; with *David to wash his Bed with his Tears*, that Bed which he had so polluted before; with *Mary Magdalen to vent so many tears as might wash her Saviour's Feet*, and then wipe them with the Hair of Her Head, that so she might do Penance with those Meretricious Eyes and Locks which had drawn others into Sin. The Pious Penitents of old had all the signs and Symptoms of the deepest mourning and Lamentations for their Sins; Ashes upon their Head, Sackcloth upon their Loins, *lying down in their confusion because they had sinned*, striking their Breasts with the *Publican*, and every one crying out in the anguish of his Soul with the *Psalmist*, *My iniquities are gon over my Head, and are*

a Heavy burden, too grievous for me to bear: My iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the Hairs of my Head, therefore my Heart faileth me: These are the words, and these the Passions, and this the Picture of a Penitent under a state of penitence and the guilt of his sins; but now upon his true Repentance all Tears are to be wiped from his Eyes, or at least the same fountain is to send forth sweet Water that did bitter, and that is to become a Balm and an Oyl of gladness to his Soul, which was so sharp and corrosive before. His Repentance will now be his greatest comfort which was so severe and so bitter before, and when his Wounds are healed and bound up, and the operation is over, The bones which were broken will rejoyce, and he will hear us joy and gladness instead of sighs Sorrow and Contrition. He who had so much Reason to be angry and displeased with himself before by reason of his Sins and his Folly, will now be pleased and satisfied when he is grown wiser and better, and will have that solid satisfaction and lasting pleasure in his own Mind, which is a Thousand times greater than all the vain and empty and short-lived pleasures of his Lusts and Vices, and he will now have a Thousand times more inward ease by the practice of Repentance than he had before by the practice of his most grateful Sins.

2. Repentance as it will free him from the present unhappiness of his Sins and Guilt,

from the present unhappiness of his Sins and Guilt,

so it will deliver him from the Fears of more dreadful Miseries in another World, and from the Dangers which he is exposed to hereafter by Reason of his Sins. This is the chief and great Reason why a Sinner is in such anguish and horron and perplexity at present because his guilt forebodes greater Miseries to him, and his conscious mind has a Prophetick Spirit that foretels evil things to come upon him hereafter; He knows he deserves Punishment and vengeance to fall upon him, and he therefore Fears though he has a short respite here yet it shall be unavoidable and in a greater measure hereafter. Religion is so Natural to the Reason of our Minds and has such a sure foundation both in Nature and Revelation that hardly any Sinner can shake off all sense of it and free himself from the fearful belief, and expectations of its future Punishments; and though he laughs at them sometimes and would seem in his highest mirth to have courage enough to make a jest of them to others, yet he fears them in good earnest, and trembles at the thoughts of them when he is alone, and when Death brings them nearer to him he is scared and terrified, and has sufficient proof of their Reality in his own Mind. What a wretched and miserable Condition is he then in when the terrors of Death and the greater terrors of Hell are set before him? when all about him is horror and Misery and the blackness of darkness, when he has nothing to look back upon but the bitter memory of
of

of his past Sins, and no prospect before him but the unknown and unconceivable torments of another World? when God's Anger lies heavy upon him and sinks him into the deepest gulph of despair, and the Grave and the bottomless pit are ready to swallow him up and to devour him both Soul and Body; What an Instance of Misery is here, what a Picture of Hell, nay what a real and sensible Hell is there then before us? Who that stands by the Bed of such a dying Wretch and draws the Curtains and sees the Agonies and hears the doleful expressions of such a miserable Creature, would not be deeply affected with such a sad state as he sees a Man put into by sin and impenitence? Who would not then think Vertue and Religion very comfortable and very desirable things, and much to be preferred to sinful looseness and extravagance? Who would not then give all the World either that he had not sin'd, or that he had Repented in time, and so not brought himself into that remediless state of present and future torment? Repentance, if it be true and sincere, will prevent a Sinner's coming to this, which will otherwise certainly be his Portion and he can never escape it in this World if he be not stupid, but to be sure not in the next. Now who that knows he must dye in a little time, and that then at furthest this will be his case if he go on in his sins and be not timely brought off from them, would ever madly continue in them,

and

and not break them off by Repentance when he is all the while exposed to this dreadful danger, and lyes open to the Fears and Miseries of another World.

How comfortable is it to be delivered from those, and to live in such a state that a Man has no Reason to be afraid of Death nor to be scared with the thoughts of another World? But whenever it comes he can welcome it chearfully, or at least submit to it patiently without horror and distraction, and have reasonable and well-grounded hopes that it shall be well with him hereafter: Full assurance he may never have without all manner of Fears; but he will have chearful and rational hopes according to the certainty and evidence of his Repentance and the sincerity of his Vertue and Obedience; such a conditional assurance every one has by a Faith truly Divine, that if he thus repents he shall be saved: This is founded on a Proposition that is Divinely revealed, and so is matter of Faith; but that I have so repented is not matter of Faith but only of private Judgment and Opinion of my self; but I have no Reason to doubt or be afraid if I know upon examining my self that I have forsaken every wilful sin, and have left the ill course of life I was in, and would not for any profit or pleasure commit a wilful Sin though I were never so much tempted to it and it were never so much in my power, and that I have thus endeavoured to live and to do my Duty sincerely to God and Man though

though with great imperfections and infirmities still upon me, this will give us a Rational and a Moral Assurance of our Salvation, which is all we can have without a particular Revelation. How will this cheer and support a Man when he comes to dye, how will it take out the sting and allay the bitterness of Death in great measure, and be the best Cordial to keep up his Spirits in his last Agonies and Extremities, being conscious to himself of his own sincerity, and his conscience not condemning him as to any wilful Sin, *He will have confidence towards God, and can assure his Heart before him, 1 John 3. 19.* He can then safely trust and rely upon the Mercy of God in and through Christ for the Pardon of all his sins, because he has truly and in time repented of them; and 'tis not a mere presumptuous and ungrounded confidence, which like *the hope of the Hypocrite shall perish, Job 8. 13.* but he has a sure Title to it by the Gospel, and *the Spirit of God beareth witness with his Spirit,* and by the joynt testimony of that and his Conscience agreeing with the Rules and Measures of the Gospel (for otherwise 'tis but deceit and delusion) he hath great inward comfort and chearful hopes of Heaven, and hath no Reason to fear but it shall be well with him in another World. 'Tis very happy to live in such a state as this where we are provided against, not only all the evils of this World and the worst that can happen to us here, but against Death and all

all the evils of another, and may cheerfully enjoy the blessings of Providence at present, and rejoyce in the hopes of a much greater happiness hereafter; so that we may as the wise Man says, *Eat our bread with joy and drink our wine with a merry heart, for God now accepteth our works, Eccles. 9. 7.* But a state of sin and impenitence is a dreadful and a hazardous state, exposed to the Terrors of Death and the amazing Evils of another World; so that if a Man consider'd it as he ought, he could not enjoy himself one moment, nor would ever live under the fears and dangers of it for all the World; and what if he thinks not of it, which is all the relief he has against it? Yet it is never the farther from him; but though he is now never so stupid or in the deepest Lethargie yet Death and Hell will awaken him, or however the flames there may be ready to catch hold of him while he is asleep and in the most senseless state.

3. Repentance puts us into a very blessed and happy state as it reconciles us to God and restores us to his favour, who was before angry and displeased with us; *We are enemies to God by our wicked works and alienated from him, Coloss. 1. 21.* Our iniquities have separated between us and our God, and our sins have hid his face from us, *Isa. 59. 2.* 'Tis they make the only breach and separation between God and his Creatures and provoke him who is Love and Goodness to put on Wrath and Anger and become even a consuming fire, so

so that his anger is said to be kindled against sinners and wax hot against them, and he poureth out the fierceness of his anger upon them and they drink of the cup of his fury and feel his wrath and indignation; many a sinner has done this and cryed out in the Anguish of his Soul, Thy wrath lyeth hard upon me, Psal. 88. 7 Thy fierce wrath goeth over me, thy terrors have cut me off, ver. 16. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me and horror hath overwhelmed me, Psal. 55. 5. Thine arrows stick fast in me and thy hand presseth me sore, Plal. 38. 2. Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear so is thy wrath, Psal. 90. 11. For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled, ver. 7. God who is a Spirit as he can convey secret and unspeakable comfort into our Souls, so he can impress intolerable and unspeakable horrors upon them, and who is able to bear the weight of his Anger, or endure the sense of his Wrath and Indignation? In his Pleasure and Favour is Life, and in his Anger is a double Death to the Soul. The inward Sensation and Perception of God's Love is the chiefest joy and happiness to a Soul, either in this World or the other, and the Sense and Perception of his Anger is the greatest Misery. God the fountain of all Happiness doth diffuse and communicate such a Peace, Joy, Comfort to good Souls, such an inward Taste and Relish of Spiritual Pleasure and Delight, as is unspeakable, past understanding, called joy in

the holy Ghost, and is no doubt the sweetest and most affecting pleasure a Soul is capable of: This the Angels and blessed Spirits above enjoy, and are transported with the most ravishing Sense and Rapturous Impressions of it, and 'tis what makes Heaven to them, and a little foretaste of it; when God *lifts up the light of his countenance upon us*, when a pious Soul *rasts and sees how good and gracious God is*, this puts more gladness in the heart than Corn and Wine and Oyl, and all worldly enjoyments. Now on the contrary when God hides his face and withdraws his loving-kindness and imprints a strong sense of his Wrath and Anger upon the Mind this is the utmost and the deepest Misery, this gives the bitterest sense of Evil, fills it with the greatest horrors, sinks it into the deepest gulph, the bottomless Pit of Misery, and is the very Punishment and Hell of the damned.

How happy is it then to be Reconciled to God by Repentance, whom we had angered and provoked by our sins, before we feel any of this and before his Wrath and Anger is poured out upon us! It will certainly fall upon every Sinner some time or other unless he Repents, for God though he defers his Anger for some time, that his Goodness and long-suffering may lead us to Repentance, yet his Abused Love Patience and Mercy will turn to greater Wrath and Fury if we persist in our sins and in a course of impenitency.

As

As 'tis a very terrible thing to have the great God our Enemy, and he certainly is so whilst we are in a state of Sin, so 'tis the comfortablest thought in the World, and what will alone make us happy to be Assured that he is our Friend and that we are in a State of Favour with him upon our Repentance.

THE CONCLUSION.

To Conclude: As all general Christian Duties are meant by Repentance; so all general Christian-Privileges and Benefits belong to it and are the Rewards of it; for as Repentance is the same thing in Scripture with *Conversion, Regeneration, the New Birth, the New Creature, the New Man*, and the like, those different words and figurative expressions denoting only the same Duty, importing the great Change and Alteration made upon the Mind and Life of a Sinner by the power of Grace and Religion: So all the benefits and privileges of Christianity, such as Election, Adoption, Pardon, Justification at present, and Glorification afterwards, which are free and gratuitous acts in God, granting and bestowing those Favours upon us for Christ's sake upon our being duly qualified and fitted to receive them: *These* all belong to those who have truly Repented and become good Men, and to none else: For God hath only Chosen, Adopted, Pardoned, Justified,

hed, and will Glorifie such and no other; and till we have Repented we have no good claim or title to any of those. Our being in a good State towards God, which is the thing meant by all those Phrases under some different considerations, is on our side wholly owing to our true Repentance and Obedience; and it is all lost and forfeited by our Impenitence and Disobedience, which on the contrary make us the Children of Wrath, the Children of the Devil and Heirs of Damnation, put us into the worst Spiritual State of Reprobation, Obduration and Excecation, according to the degrees of our Sins and Impenitence, and into that of Condemnation it self, which is the word that directly answers to that of Justification.

All those Scriptural Phrases and Expressions of a good State belong to Repentance, and to the true Christian Penitent; and all those which signifie a bad one belong as truly to Wickedness and Impenitence; for though without the Free-Grace and Mercy of God in and through Christ we could not be put into any such good State, nor have a title to any such Privileges or any thing we could do, yet to suppose that God will put us into those states without any regard to our own Actions or not upon the account of them, is to destroy all Religion, all Divine Government, all Future Judgment, and all Rewards Punishments, in another World. I might clear and illustrate and enlarge upon these, had not this

this Discourse already swelled upon my hands into too great a bulk, and did they not run into something of Controversie, which I would carefully avoid.

I shall therefore only give this last Advice to the Penitent who hath brought himself by the Grace of God into this Good and Happy State, that when he is thus got out of the Paths of Death and of Sin into those of Life and Vertue, that he would go on and proceed in the new and right way he is in, and make a speedy and further progress in all Piety and Goodness, that like *St. Paul forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching unto those which are before,* he may follow and apprehend them, and so press forward towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, *Phil. 3. 13, 14.* That now he is become a Christian in good earnest he would more zealously promote that Religion which he opposed and was an enemy to before, and shew he is a true Convert by his zeal and earnestness against Vice and Irreligion, that he would make all amends he can for his past miscarriages, by doing the greatest good he is able, by serving God and his Glory more heartily, and thus *loving much because much is forgiven him,* so that *where sin abounded Grace may much more abound,* and he may make up the failures as far as he can of his former Life, and give the best satisfaction and reparation he is able, to God and Religion, whom he had so highly injured and affronted;

ed; that he may not be contented only to get out of an ill State, and be just safe and out of danger, but may endeavour to rise higher and grow in *Grace* and all manner of Goodness, and attain to higher improvements and perfections of *Vertue* and Holiness. This should be his aim and design, and the Business of his whole Life; and this will certainly be so if he has the true love of *Vertue*, of God or of Heaven in his Soul, he will then be doing more good, growing more vertuous *more rich towards God*, and continually thriving and increasing in his good Condition and his Heavenly Treasure, as Worldly Men are in their Earthly Trades and Riches; he will be dayly adding to his store, and knowing the worth of *Vertue* the more, the more he hath of it, he will by a laudable Covetousness be every day raising his Stock, improving his Talents, and abounding more and more in all useful *Vertues* and Christian good Works, which should be the great business and design of every Christian all his Life.

This will give unspeakable comfort peace and satisfaction to his Mind, and set him not only out of danger, and free him from an ill state, but out of all doubts fears and uncertainties in his thoughts about it; for the more perfect we grow in *Vertue* the more chearful and well-grounded hopes and assurance we shall have in our selves, and the more *confidence towards God*. 'Tis hard to know and distinguish exactly between the first lines and partings of Vice and *Vertue*,

Vertue, of a bad and good State, where the lowest degree of one begins and the other ends, as 'tis difficult to know the first conception and beginning of Life in an Embrio, and the first day-break of the morning; but when Life appears by sensible motions and visible acts and operations, there is no doubt about it, nor when the Sun is up and come to the Meridian that it is perfect day; so what is the beginning of the Spiritual Life in a Christian Penitent, or when he first is delivered from the Power of Darkness into Light and a Christian good State, is not so easily known; but 'tis plain and clear when he performs the proper acts and operations of the Divine Life, and *walks as a child of light, and his goodness shines more and more unto perfect day; i. e.* when he becomes more thoroughly vertuous and more perfectly a good Man, it will be more out of doubt to himself, and he will have all the chearful and comfortable evidence of it to his unspeakable satisfaction. 'Tis generally very low and imperfect degrees of Religion and Vertue that make us fearful and doubtful; the more perfect we grow the more assured we shall have reason to be of our good State; and though the Penitents tears at first bring clouds and darkness, fear and melancholy over him, yet perfect Vertue when he is restored to it will make a perfect day, and bring in the clearest comfort peace and satisfaction to his Mind; and thus though *he sowed in Tears he shall reap in Joy.*

BOOKS lately PRINTED for W. TAYLOR,
at the Ship in St. Paul's Church-Yard.

THE Book of Common Prayer, and Administration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, according to the Use of the Church of England, with the Psalms of David, Paraphrased. By William Nicholas, D. D. Chaplain to his Grace the Duke of Montagu.

Gulielmi Nicholſii Presbyteri Defenſio Eccleſiæ Anglicanæ in qua Vindicantur Omnia quæ ab Adverſariis in Doctrina Cultu & Diſciplinâ ejus improbantur. Præmiſſitur Apparatuſ qui Hiſtoriam Turbarum & ſectiſione ab Eccleſiâ Anglicanâ exortarum continet.

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